



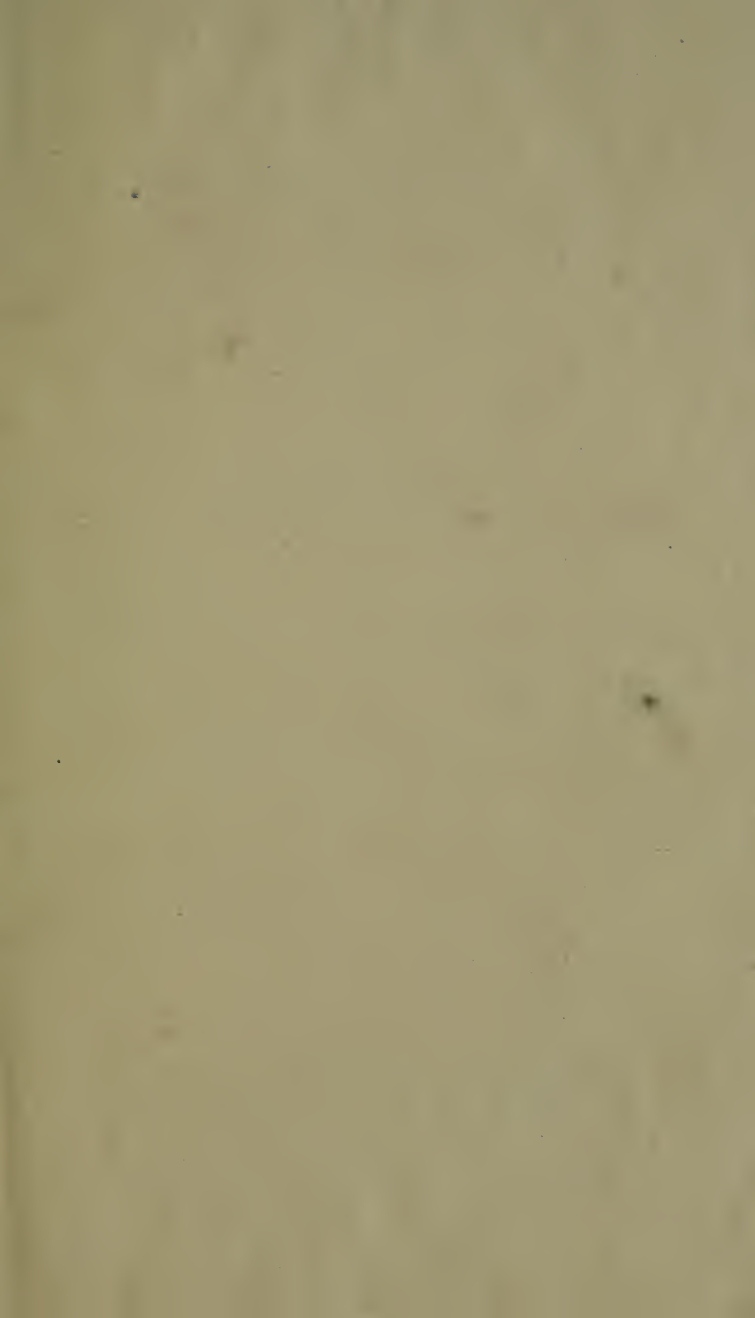
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Butwick

JOHN AND I.

As knightly swords, of polished grain,
Are proven perfect when they bend—
True hearts may swerve, but in the end
Will right themselves and win again.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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JOHN AND I.

CHAPTER I.

THOUGH Hermine had only glanced at me once, I felt assured that I was recognised. Her face was too expressive to hide the surprise and curiosity which the knowledge of my presence had given her; and, however adroitly the information was conveyed, I knew that her companion had

been made aware of it too. I also noticed that Hermine borrowed a pencil from the Prince, and hastily wrote a few lines on the back of a visiting-card, which she afterwards placed in her pocket. The opera was half over when a tremendous wink from my uncle, and a telegraphic sign from Sophie, directed my eyes to the opposite box, where, with his flossy hair, long as ever, and the fair indolent face not a whit changed, sat Count Cress, the Colonel's antagonist, and Ricky's unmitigated enemy. He honoured us all with a lazy stare, totally unreadable.

It was about nine o'clock when the performance ended, and, after many violent efforts, I at last succeeded in making my way to the park. What a treat to breathe its cool stillness, after the glare

and suffocation of the theatre ! The white statues gleamed like ghosts amid the orangery, and the wide-stretching palace, guarded by two boy-sentinels, reminded you of the sleeping giant watched by Sinbad and his friend. Only one figure passed me, that of the king's son-in-law, who, having taken off his uniform, was hastening home in plain dress, and unattended. I was turning into the Weimar Strasse, when some one else overtook me, walked on a step or two, looked at me full in the face, finally stopped, and I saw at once that it was Count Cress.

"I believe," he said with a kind of indifferent politeness, "that I am addressing Professor Brown?"

"I believe that I am addressing Count Cress?" I replied, smiling.

He actually exerted himself enough to laugh.

“If you live in the same house as the Oberst von Blum, you no doubt know more about my affairs than I do myself,” he replied. “But it is on another person’s account that I come to you—a young lady, the sister of your pupil, has entrusted me with a note.”

He fumbled in his pocket, and at last brought out a crumpled visiting card, on which Hermine had scribbled with a pencil the following:—

“I must see you before—*her* marriage. Is it really true? I can hardly believe anything so utterly wretched is going to happen. If you love your brother—if you have a particle of interest in Carl, or of regard for *her*, you will do all in your power to

prevent it. I cannot appoint a meeting with you now, but go to the Volk's Fest to-morrow, perhaps there I may get an opportunity of saying to you what it is of the utmost importance for all our sakes that you should hear.—
HERMINE."

"And what message do I take to the young lady?" asked the Count. "She sent me off in such a hurry, that I only know you are Professor Brown, and a gentleman whom she wants to see."

Her aunt—it was Carline Weiler that I had seen there, the sister-in-law, the *hater* of the Baroness! I was too intent upon recalling her features, to answer the Count at once. He waited in good-natured patience.

“I am at the Fräulein’s service,” I replied; “I believe that is all I can say.”

“Then I have the honour of wishing the Herr Professor good evening.”

Indolent though he was, he took off his hat to me as laboriously as if he were greeting his sovereign, then sauntered back by the way he had come. I hastened home, where I found supper awaiting, and Rösle listening with an expressive grin to the Oberst’s account of the Count’s appearance at the opera. Sophie had taken off her sparkling dress, and was helping my aunt to prepare the potato salad, with the brightest face in the world; but poor Ottilie went off to bed without eating anything, and with a very spiritless good night.

I had promised to devote the next day to Carl's enjoyment, and called for him at an early hour, as the king and all the *Adel*, starred and flounced, were to pass through the park at twelve o'clock. I found the Baroness sitting with the cheerful, homely Frau Roser, as much at home with her old friend's domesticity as she had been with my simple little Sophie. She received the intelligence of Hermine's presence in Stuttgart calmly, but tears filled her eyes as she read the note which had been given to me by Count Cress.

"Poor child!" she said; "poor, mistaken Hermine!—will she never believe that I am her friend? See her, Henderson—persuade her to an interview with me; surely she will not be hard to her

mother now—she trusts you, and will listen to you; tell her how gentle my heart is towards her, how gladly I would welcome her to her old home again, if she would but love me, and be guided by me. But she never will—*her* influence has been too long at work to give me any hope of that.”

A tear fell on her clasped hands as she spoke, and the good old Frau, noticing it, bustled up to her, smoothed her hair, stroked her cheek, and kissed her as if she had been a child.

“Do not weep, dear heart,” she said; “our Ernestine ran away with a worthless Frenchman, and nearly broke our hearts; but when her first baby was born, she repented, and begged forgiveness on

her knees, and not one of our children has been more dutiful to us since."

The Baroness kissed the rough, kindly hands that caressed her, and replied—

"No, I will not be cast down; I will always hope, dear friend. When Hermine shall have children in her arms, she cannot help remembering how tenderly I loved her."

A sudden touch on her shoulder caused her to break off. It was John who had entered unheard; he kissed her hand tenderly and reverently as a lover should do, took the work off her lap, and laid a bunch of grapes there instead.

"I have been on the hills before breakfast," he said blithely, "to gather the first fruits of the season for you. Every one else is keeping holiday—why

should not we? So, Marie, put on your bonnet, and let us go among the vineyards."

I left them as soon as Carl was ready. We were joined in the park by the Colonel and Sophie, and lost no time in stationing ourselves by the side of the basin heading the great avenue, from whence we obtained a good view of the *cortége* as it approached.

There was no crowd, no police, and no cheering ; yet every one seemed pleased to see the jolly old King, who bowed to his subjects as if they were his intimate acquaintances. He rode well, and was accompanied by his sons and officers. Then followed carriages innumerable, the royal ones being distinguished by scarlet-coated servants, and by an extra trimness of the whole equipage.

“See, Mr. Brown, there is Hermine—how beautiful she looks!” cried Carl, quite carried away by his feelings, and waving his cap enthusiastically. “Oh! what a splendid dress she has on, and how pretty she is! She never looked half so pretty at home.”

He turned away when the carriage had passed, and watched it disappear.

“I am her brother—I ought to have been with her, Mr. Brown. I think I should have felt so proud to have sat by her side as that fat old gentleman did. If we get a chance, I will speak to her at Cannstatt. Mama will not be angry, I know; for she always wishes me to be kind to Hermine—and I feel to-day as if I could love her.”

The boy's chivalric admiration of his

sister's beauty amused me a good deal. It was so like a child, too—especially a child who had been brought up in such seclusion—to be dazzled by the miniature pomp that surrounded her. Has the reader ever been to a *Volk's Fest*? If not, let him follow Carl and myself as we pass out of the park, and lose ourselves in the crowd pouring into Cannstatt by every available channel of locomotion.

Taking into account the fifty thousand brought by rail, allowing that the pedestrians amount to half that number, and the passengers by omnibus, drosky, and eilwagen to one-third, we shall bring into the small area no fewer than ninety thousand pleasure-seekers. And now for the *pabulum* of so large an appetite.

Passing under a triumphal arch of handsome and lofty dimensions, the pillars covered with sprays of green fir, and the upper part entirely composed of pyramidal decorations of fruit and corn, the alternate rings of crimson apples, yellow pears, and purple plums forming the gaudiest and most appropriate autumnal celebration in the world, we enter a circus two miles long. At the upper end stands the Royal Pavilion, of red and white linen, and the galleries for the people extend on either side. Here are exhibited horsemanship, races in pony-chaises, races on horseback by the pupils of the Stuttgart riding-school, for prizes given by the Crown Princess, acting horses, etc. This spectacle is the gilt to the great gingerbread baked at the King's birthday for

the Würtembergers. You are not admitted to the lowest place for less than a shilling; and the highest, which must be obtained a day or two before, costs no less than two.

For those who are contented with cheaper and less refined pleasure, there are murder-singers; wonderful anomalies of human and animal life; women with beards, and men eight feet high; a sweet Swiss young lady, weighing twenty stones, who had created an immense sensation in London and Paris; dancing dogs; Punch and Judy, somewhat vulgarized, but harmless and racy; grand battle-scenes, shows of wax-work, a clown, lotteries for waistcoats—and so on *ad infinitum*, the prices of admission varying from twopence to sixpence. Then there is a meadow covered

with umbrellas, red, green, orange, and blue, looking as though a colony of small shopkeepers had just fled there from a sacked city, where you can buy everything very cheap indeed, and where you have to pick your way carefully through thick rows of green crockery and water tubs, which are exposed for sale on the turf.

As to eating and drinking, the preparations are, of course, stupendous for so large a multitude. Stalls of bread and fruit are to be seen at every turn ; and in the gigantic dining booth, no less than fifty millions of dishes of sour-kraut are consumed during the festival—not to speak of beer, coffee, *kuchen*, and soup. Beef-steak is served in abundance, to meet the wants of Anglicised palates, daily increas-

ing here. When I add that the whole atmosphere is rather beery, sour-krautish, and cigarish, and that the crowd is well-behaved, sober, and polite throughout, I hope that I may return to my narrative with the satisfaction of having given the reader a little idea of the *Volk's Fest*.

The Colonel and his brother having enjoyed Punch and the clown, Carl having filled his pockets with innumerable musical originalities, and satisfied himself regarding the fat young Swiss lady, we joined my aunt and the girls in Hermann's garden. Other friends came up, and we were soon a party of sixteen, with a small table and ten chairs between us. Despite this little drawback, and having to wait an hour before we could

get any one to attend to us, we were very merry ; and when the coffee and wine did come, my uncle was as triumphant as possible.

“ There is not a *kellner* here,” he said, “ who dares to neglect *me*. Did I not say so, Brother Ernst ? ”

“ But this one was a very long time in coming, *vaterle*,” rather unwisely observed little Sophie, at which the Colonel said nothing, but complacently turned to his wine. His brother partook of the luxury, and it was pleasant to see how the two enjoyed it, pouring into their glasses about a table-spoonful at once, as if to lengthen their treat to the utmost. The gentlemen now began to smoke, the ladies chatted gaily over their sugar-water, with short pauses now and

then to listen to the band; and we were growing a very sociable party indeed, when, all at once, Carl startled us by seizing his cap and dashing at full speed through the garden. There were so many visitors and *kellners* passing and repassing, that, for a minute or two, I lost sight of him; but soon I saw the long fair hair and bright eyes only a few yards from me; and though he was still rushing on in wild haste, I succeeded in catching his attention. Half-deprecating, half-rebelling against my command to stop, he slackened his pace.

“It was Hermine—she passed by the steps there—she will be gone if I delay,” he said.

“Come back, Carl!”

He had never yet resisted my autho-

urity when I exercised it, nor did he now, but his submission was a proud and angry one.

“Have I not a right to speak to my own sister?” he cried passionately, the hot tears rising to his eyes. “You once desired me always to love her, and now you will not let me speak to her. Is it kind or just of you, Mr. Brown?”

“Is it kind or just?” echoed a clear voice behind me, and, looking up, I saw Hermine.

She held out her hand with grave, searching eyes and an easy laugh.

“It is neither, Mr. Brown, but I will forgive you, as I am too troubled about other things to be angry. Dear Carl, did you really wish to see me? It was very

good of you, Carl, and I shall not forget it."

She stooped down, and kissed him. Afterwards, he told me that they were the kindest words she had ever spoken to him.

"I have been looking for you, Mr. Brown; after the Circus, we drove through the Fair, but you were nowhere to be seen, and had I not heard you call Carl, I think I should have gone away in despair."

"And will you return in the king's carriage, with the fat old gentleman?—and have you spoken to the king?" asked Carl.

"Is it such a miracle, Carl?" answered the young lady, tapping his cheek with her white-gloved hand; "why, child, I

have dined with him often, and yesterday he asked me how old you were, and when you would go into the army."

Carl was quite delighted, and would have asked a dozen questions more, had not Hermine said,

"Carl, do you see the fat old gentleman standing there, by the portico of Hermann's, with a young lady beside him. That is Prince Zuffenhausen, and the young lady is his niece—will you go and tell them that your sister will come in five minutes?"

The boy bounded off rapidly. Hermine turned to me with a voice of desperate appeal.

"Mr. Brown, we have only five minutes—I dare not stay longer, or my interview with you might be observed—

what can I do?—what can I say to make you see the terrible results this marriage will lead to?—*must* lead to. I do not speak of such probabilities and possibilities of misfortune as any one cannot help anticipating from a step so unwise, so unnatural, so wholly and miserably unreasonable. I speak of certainties, and as surely as my mother marries, so surely will she regret it in tears and bitterness all her life long. I know well that mama never loved my father, that she has been lonely and unhappy, that she is young enough and warm-hearted enough to make a man happy now, if it were not for circumstances—which—which I cannot explain to you, but which place in the way of her love and marriage such obstacles

as only a heartless, worthless wretch would put aside."

I drew a step farther from the girl, with her fair face and burning, cruel words.

She went on, eagerly :

"You must have influence with this—must I say the hateful words—*this future husband of my mother's*. How I should hate him if he were not your brother; oh! for God's sake, do not let him bring such irremediable wretchedness on us all. For himself, it will be a most unhappy marriage; if he loves her, he will be driven to despair when he finds that his love can bring her no comfort—but only gall and bitterness; if his motives are only mercenary ones, he will discover, when it is too late, that he has sacrificed himself for a

shadow, since, on Carl's coming of age, mama will have but a bare competency——”

“Silence!” I burst out fiercely, forgetting my duty to the lady, in my indignation against the woman; “I will not hear such words from you, whatever may be in your heart. What right have you to impute the meanest and worst motives to a man you have never seen? Do you not think that a woman with *her* beauty, and sweet, gentle nature, can be loved for herself—do you not think that a poor man can love with an honest love?”

I felt my eyes grow hot and dry, and the blood tingle to the very roots of my hair. She held out her hand, and said in a calmer manner—

“For Heaven’s sake, do not let us quarrel. It is natural that I should feel as I do about this unhappy business, and if you were as generous as you have sometimes been to me, you would readily forgive anything I say in my warrantable indignation. But do not be misled, do not think that it is entirely on account of the consequences it must bring to myself that I dread this marriage. If I saw the least chance of mama being made happier by it, however much I might be the loser by her gain, I should rejoice. Oh! Mr. Brown, no one can tell how I love her; and by very reason of my love, I would gladly give up anything now to break off such an engagement. I know that you will not give me credit

for unselfishness, but the results will convince you of your injustice to me. It is for Carl's sake, not for my own, that I make this appeal to you ; most likely in a few weeks I shall be married, and mama can hardly be more divided from me in any case than she is now. But Carl, whom she loves so devotedly—Carl, who has only her to love—you do not, cannot know how this marriage will come between their affection.”

“You are very hard in your judgments, Fräulein,” I said, with a bitter smile. “I must beg of you also to be generous, or at least just, to my brother, who, whatever faults he may have, has none of those of which your heart accuses him.”

“How can I be generous to him—is

it not human that I should speak and think as I do? But I must not stay any longer. Will you help me, Mr. Brown, or will you not? The marriage *must* be broken off"—her voice sank to a softer key—"you are the only friend to whom I can appeal in this matter—you love Carl, and have his interests at heart—you respect and like my mother—your brother is your dearest friend: I assure you it is for the sake of all three, that I entreat your mediation."

"But," I said impatiently, "even if I see things in the same light, I could do nothing. Of what use is it to promise you my assistance under such circumstances?"

"And you will help on the marriage, and repent of it bitterly afterwards," she

answered, "Well, I have done all I could. I will not trouble you any more, Mr. Brown. Adieu. I thought you were my friend; but how could I expect you to stand by me against your own brother? Forgive me for hating him, as I forgive you for mistrusting me. Perhaps—perhaps one day you will feel that you have been unjust to me. I can wait till then for your apology. Adieu!"

She bowed very haughtily, and walked towards the portico where Carl and the Prince were standing. I could hear her laugh gaily as she joined them. Perhaps but for that laugh, and the remembrance of a time when she had mistrusted me herself, I should have felt that I deserved her coldness. But to the Baroness I was bound by a friendship the truest and

purest that could exist between man and woman ; and to John by the unspeakable love which began in those days when

“ Years of love and truth
Were woven in each daisy chain we made.”

Had I, had Hermine, any right to assume a prescience which only belongs to the Most High, and, by taking upon ourselves the judgment of future events, annul a present good (thus doing evil) that greater evil might be averted? I think not ; and, thinking so, I have never reproached myself for the resolution I kept then.

CHAPTER II.

IT was on the evening of the fifth and last day of the Volk's Fest that Marie became my sister; henceforth I shall call her by no other name, since none can be so dear to me as that. Oh! Marie, dear mistress, kind, tender friend!—as I write thy beloved name, how my heart yearns to thee! When I think of thy fair, serene face, and of thy sweet, strong,

woman's nature, my thought of thee becomes a religion, and I thank Heaven who gave thee to us.

They were married after the simple manner of the Lutheran Church. The good Herr Roser and his wife, my uncle, Otilie, Sophie, and myself, stood in the side pews, whilst John and Marie knelt down at the altar before the priest. A beautiful chaunt of Spohr's, by unseen singers, commenced the service. The minister then addressed to them a short and impressive charge on the duties of husband and wife, parents and citizens; after which, joining their hands in his, he put to them a form of betrothal, the pair merely replying "Yes," and changing rings. He blessed them, shook hands heartily with each, and, as the choristers

broke out into a gladder strain, we joined the husband and wife in the aisle. Ottilie and Sophie, both dressed in white, bore in their hands a tiny bouquet, as an offering to the bride. Sophie, shy and childlike as she was, stepped forward and said her *Glückswünsche* without hesitation; but Ottilie trembled and blushed, tried to speak and could not—finally burst into tears.

Marie looked at her with interest, and bent forward to kiss her as she had done Sophie; but the poor girl sank down on a bench near, and buried her face in her hands.

“Ottilie, this is not fair,” said John; “I must have no sad faces on my wedding-day — look up and wish us happiness.”

He did not know she loved him. It is strange that the heart, which is so far-seeing, should often be as blind! Oh! John, John, you little thought what cruel words those were!

It is the usual custom to have a collation after a wedding, to which all the friends are invited; but in this instance we had neither the one nor the other. The Blums walked home as they had come, and I followed Herr Roser's carriage to the Hoch Strasse, where Carl was the only visitor to welcome us. We had no preparation and no festival; but the ordinary simple dinner at one o'clock was decorated with flowers, and after it we carried our dessert and Neckar wine into the garden, and touched glasses under

the trees. We were all very quietly happy. Carl sat between John and Marie, looking at the former with his old large-eyed admiration, and yet feeling a little jealous, I think, that some one else was his rival in his mother's affections.

Early in the afternoon came the parting. My brother and his wife were to spend a few weeks at Heidelberg and on the Rhine, whilst Carl was to be entrusted to my care.

"I feel that I am asking a great sacrifice of you," said Marie; "but on our return you must no longer think of us, but of yourself. I shall not rest till I see you as happy as you deserve to be; and I think I know who could make you very happy indeed." Her

bright smile faded . as she handed a letter to me, and added, "Let Hermine have this before she goes, if you can see her; and give it into her own hands—it would be best; but anyhow, I know I can rely upon you. And now, God bless you, my dear, kind friend!"

Carl clung to her neck passionately.

"Mama, mama, you said you would never leave me. I should soon have been as old and as tall as Mr. John, and then I could have taken as much care of you as he will. Are you sure that you will come back, mama, and always love me as well as you have done?" He bent closer to her and whispered: "If not—if you

love him so much that you don't care about me, I should hate him—I am sure I should!"

She folded him in her arms, kissed his face and hair, but said not a word, for her tears were falling fast. John laid one hand on the boy's shoulder, and one on Marie's.

"Why, Carl," he said with that winning ingenuousness that must always find its way to the heart, "you will have two to love you instead of one—is that a thing to feel unhappy about? Be manly, and then you shall be my companion in hunting, in shooting, in sledging, in everything that you and I have talked so much about."

"I shall soon go into the army," replied Carl proudly; "then we shall

be equals, Mr. John. I shall like you very much then."

"And why not now, Carl?"

The boy coloured and drew himself up.

"When I am a strong, brave man, as you are, Mr. John, mama will give me a different love to that she does now—she will look up to me and trust to me as she trusts to you, and that is the love that I shall most value, since it will make us equals."

Circumstances which afterwards transpired have enabled me to place Marie's letter before the reader:—

"MY DEAREST CHILD, MY HERMINE,—
Though you parted from me in anger—though you said you would never

call me *mother* again — I could look forward to a time when your heart would open once more to me with the love you gave me in your childhood! Do you remember that time, Hermine — have you ever counted the weary years when the affection of my children alone made life bearable to me? Oh, child, child! do not grow hard and cold against your mother: do you know how bitterly I have yearned for your love?—how sorrowfully I have wept over your separation from me? No, not till you are a mother yourself will you know this. God forgive you, Hermine, for the misery you have caused me!

“But you will say that I am guilty towards *you* in the step I have taken

to-day; you will think me heartless, frivolous, vain—you will condemn me as utterly failing in my duty towards yourself and Carl. Hermine, judge me justly, and as a woman; place yourself in my position—think of the years that I had to look back upon—the unhappy, unloved married life, that no sooner ended than I lost you: picture to yourself the desolation and despair of my heart when I found that my daughter, she to whom I looked for sympathy, and love, and comfort, turned from me and mistrusted me. Can you wonder that I accept a good and pure love when it is offered to me? Whither should I turn for support and protection? Shall I not be better able to further Carl's interests with my husband to

help me? Oh, Hermine, could you esteem your mother so lightly as to think that this new tie will distance me by one hair-breadth from Carl?

“ But I will not reproach you. Heaven bless you and keep you, my child! Ah, without this new good gift I might have been happy, had your heart been loyal to me! Let that thought make you gentler towards me; and let me entreat of you to consider well the prospects opening before you. If you doubt for one instant whether the love and confidence of a lifetime can be given and received from the man you are about to marry, draw back whilst it is yet time. Think of my own first wretched marriage. You are more fortunate than I was, since

you are free to choose; therefore do not suffer yourself to be led by any worldly considerations, but love when you marry, or never marry at all.

“Heaven grant that this may not be a leave-taking letter! You will, you *must* relent to me soon. Hermine — oh, my child, I love you! Whatever may happen, never forget that I shall always feel towards you as I did in those days when your little hands were clasped on my knees, and your voice followed mine in prayer.”

The excitement of the Colonel, when he heard that his old enemy, Count Cress, was contemplating a marriage, to the utter abandonment of the handsome, high-spirited Christine, knew no bounds.

My aunt, who was extremely lenient to the defalcations of the stronger sex, tried to smooth down his fiery indignation, but the Colonel would not be moved. No Don Quixote could have been more resolute in his defence of a fair Dorothea than he was on the side of Christine against the man whom he delighted to annoy. His first thought was to go to the police, which, on second consideration, as there was no criminal to be found (for the Count had left Stuttgart several days), and no crime to be proved, he discarded. His second, to write to Christine, and inform her of the shameful trickery by which she had been enticed away during the visit of his betrothed. His third, to find out the Count, and bring him

to shame on the eve of his marriage. His fourth—but I cannot enumerate my uncle's chivalric resolves for the defence of the fair; bold and original as they were, when I returned to Schloss Weiler, a week after John's marriage, not one had been carried out.

And now I shall say a word of myself. On the last evening of my stay in the Weimar Strasse, Sophie promised to be my wife. We sat under the pear-tree as the sun sank behind the hills; and though there were merry cries of fruit-gatherers in the orchards around, and echoes of guns on the vineyards, near us everything was very still—so still that I could count the stitches thrown off Sophie's knitting-needles.

My dear, bright-eyed, timid little Sophie! How she blushed to meet my lover's eyes! How ingenuously she owned that she had at first liked John so much better than me, and that she was sure she should make the stupidest little wife in the world! Why had I not chosen Ottilie?—Ottilie was clever, and liked books, and could speak English; she couldn't do anything—she was sure I should get very tired of her. Finally, she burst into tears, and said, if I loved her very much, she would leave mama and papa, even Ottilie, for me.

Meus hic dies est! How young and fresh I felt when I awoke next morning! What a pleasant tide of new thoughts rushed into my mind, driving

out the stores of classic learning which had cobwebbed it hitherto! How much more of a man—how much prouder of myself—I felt when I thought of the love I had won; and, God help me, how much humbler, too, in that a loving, pure young girl would henceforth look up to me and reverence me as a counsellor and protector.

I hold that the best of men are never quite worthy of the first deep love of a good woman. There is such perfect unselfishness, such purity, such deep inward religiousness in the nature of women, as never can exist in men, even in the noblest and most honest, because the hardening temptations to which we are exposed in early manhood must taint us with coarseness

more or less. And for the sake of this self-forgetfulness and inherent tenderness, I feel a respect and love towards the whole sex, and would shrink from giving an ungracious or angry word to the ragged Lumpenhändlerin, who, with her baby hanging to her back, bawls out in nasal Suabish at our windows.

We are not the people to shine in history, the Sophiechen and I, so perhaps the least said about us the better. Yet, in the hearts of the prosiest and of the least romantic, is there not ever some innermost *adytum*, where the god is worshipped, perhaps the most devoutly because it is unseen? Think you it is the poets alone, and the gifted and beautiful, who have felt earth to be divine?

Ah, no ! we are not all poets — we are not all beautiful — we are not all made to be much loved ; but all of us who have grown old can look back to a time which makes our hearts green and blithe again with the spring of youth — the birds return to long-deserted nests, the frozen streams thaw in the sunshine and dance gaily towards the sea—the whole earth is beautiful and glad—the skies are bright and near !

And what lovely hopes and aspirations have we all buried!—weeping bitterly, and without consolation, as for dear friends, whom we shall see no more ! Time has planted daisies and violets over those sorrowful graves ; we visit them no longer in mourning ; we can bear the day's sun-

shine to fall on us as we weep ; but they are hardly less dear. *L'amour a passé par-là.* Tread lightly, oh ! foot of the stranger, in her hallowed track !

CHAPTER III.

HERBST FERIEN, or autumn holiday, is over. The orchards are stripped, the cellar of every *Wirthshaus* is filled with apple-wine, and all hands are busy in the vintage.

We eat grapes for breakfast, grapes for dinner, grapes at Abendessen; every child you meet has a bunch in his hand, and the most luscious Muscatel are to be had without the asking. All night long the

vineyards are guarded from pillagers by watchmen, who blow a horn when it is time to be relieved; the people have a jolly, rollicking air, which is quite new to them; everyone is wide-awake, and active, and important! Truly, so cheerful and active a time is a thing to rejoice at in this dreamy country!

We have expected John and Marie for two days; but to-day they have written to say they are really coming. To humour Carl, I make a study of the summer-house among the vineyards, from whence we can see the carriage as it turns from Marbach; and, what with the wide prospect around him, his interest in the proceedings of the vintagers, and his anxiety about the new-comers, Carl makes a sad hand at Euclid this morning.

“Hurra! hurra!” he cried at last, rushing on to the balcony which fronted the upper room of the summer-house; “there they are, Mr. Brown! I can see the carriage as plainly as possible!—look! it is just on the top of the hill!”

We pocketed our books, and descended, locking the door after us, Carl hastening forward in a flush of joy and expectation. When we were near enough to raise our hats, and be answered by Marie’s handkerchief, Carl slackened his pace, and turned to me with a look of pale inquiry.

“Mr. Brown”—his lips trembled as he spoke—“I’m so glad that mama is come home, but yet I feel afraid to meet her—as if I should hate Mr. John; she has had no one to be kind to her but me,

since Aunt Carline went away—and ought she not to have loved me better than anyone?”

I touched his lips with my hand — a sign he understood well.

“But, indeed, Mr. Brown, I cannot help it. There is no one else in the world like mama, and she cannot feel the same to me now.”

“Child, child, do you want a sermon?—are you going back again to unreasonable-ness and jealousy?—am I no longer to be your friend?”

He dashed away a tear or two, and ran forward to meet them.

Were they happy, John and Marie?—I think they were. When she alighted from the carriage to walk home, whilst one hand was given to Carl, the other lay

confidingly on her husband's arm ; she seemed to rest on his strength and fresh manhood with a sense of being protected and cared for ; her cheek had brightened, as if a quicker current stirred the blood in her veins ; her voice, always sweet, was sweeter still, with the music of a heart at rest. And John—it was evident that the first intoxication of *his* love had not yet passed away !

He loved her with that wild, single, complete love which men rarely give to a woman younger than, or inferior to, themselves. He was loved in return. He had a right to be happy. I have often asked myself why it was that John could so easily win the love of women. Had not Ottilie—(I speak thy name in all respect, my cousin)—given him what

a girl can only give once in her life, the first tenderness of her heart? Even my aunt and the stern Ricky adored him. In our bachelor quarters at Cambridge, was it not John to whom you gave all the *bonnes bouches*, the liver wing of the chicken, and the creamiest of the custards, my dear Mrs. Thomson?—and can you remember how often Mr. Henderson went without any chicken and custard at all? But *quid multa*? It is always so. I am short and stout, and though extremely reverential and forgiving to womankind, have invariably obtained from them a good-natured condescension rather than a timid, flattering respect. Women never blush and drop their eyelids when I address them; they never tremble even when I am

tender; they are always ready to give me their friendship, and I have no doubt, you ladies, will call Sophie a fool for giving me anything else. But John, with his manly, open brow, and small white teeth, which gleam with such pleasant sunshine—his deferential voice and bold tread—his ready, versatile mind and impulsive heart—had he not won the hand of the sweetest woman ever loved by man? Could these gifts alone account for such fortune? I leave this question to be settled by the ladies, and ask pardon for my lengthy digression.

We had finished dinner, and Carl proposed a game of chess, or *mill*, before coffee.

“When are we to leave Weiler, ma-

ma?" he asked; "it is getting cold here already."

The afternoon was wet, and it was always cold in wet weather at Schloss Weiler.

Marie shrugged her shoulders, and desired Heinrich to fetch her mantle.

"I wish we had stoves here, we would have a fire now, Carl; but the vintage will soon be over, and then we will go to Schloss Neutingen. You will have plenty of hunting there, John."

"And sledging and skating! I love Neutingen!" said Carl, delightedly—then immediately changing his tone he added, "Mama, may I and Mr. Henderson stay here? You won't want me."

Before Marie could answer, John turned round quickly.

“My dear Carl, how can you vex us all so much? You know in your own heart that we shall be happiest together.”

Just then, when we were each one pained and silent, there was a sound of carriage-wheels in the courtyard below. Carl ran into the gallery and looked out. In less than a minute he returned; quick as lightning he made a mute apology to John by kissing his mother's cheek, then whispered—

“Forgive me, mamachen—it is—”

“Carline,” said Marie, rising with cold, hard courtesy, still having Carl's hand in hers; “I did not expect to see you again. I will not be such a hypocrite as to give you hearty welcome.”

“No, Marie, do not do anything

against your conscience ; still you might kiss your husband's sister. If you came to my house, Marie, I should greet you kindly."

The voice was very gentle, plaintive almost; and Marie, as if touched by it, advanced half-way, then drew back suddenly and sat down, her clear, intent gaze fixed upon her sister-in-law. Carline met it unflinchingly ; there was a gathering emotion in every feature, but for the present it worked unseen.

"Carl, *you*, at least, will welcome me, for was I ever harsh or unjust to you? Have I ever made you unhappy?" She drew the boy to her and kissed him with a strange exultant fondness: "How big and tall you have grown, Carl!—and how I have longed to see you, my pet—my darling!"

What made this woman so fascinating? Was it her dark, wistful eyes that seemed magnetically to draw a sympathy from your heart, whether you willed or no? Was it her mouth, which smiled a sad, uneasy smile, as if in memory of some joy she had quite lost now?—or was it her manner of soft and feminine appeal to you? I cannot tell. I can only say that, loving Marie as I did, and knowing how intensely she was hated by this woman, I still felt pityingly towards her, and accused a world of injustice, that could have rendered such a nature bitter and contemptible.

Marie's eyes scintillated as she watched those long, taper fingers winding about Carl's curls. At last she could contain herself no longer and said,

“Carline, why have you come here? You have done me too much harm already—oh! go. I can better forgive you when you are away; you have taken Hermine from me—let me be in peace.”

“You will not introduce me to your husband, then?—but I may tell Hermine that you are happy—the news will come kindly on her wedding-day. So, you are happy at last, Marie?”

She rose, and fronted the husband and wife as they stood together. She gazed at them fixedly for some seconds, with a hungry anger in her eyes, that grew fearfully bright as she went on:

“You are happy, Marie! God! how unequally thou hast portioned out to us the good and the evil of this life!

Well is it for those who have faith in the Divine Compensation hereafter. *You*, who had no love to give your husband—no love, and scanty duty—who call yourself a loving and devoted mother, can pick up a new love and a new tie as easily as a pin from the floor. You, who hold your children so dear to you that you grudged me their slightest token of affection, can throw them off, and marry, without a scruple of conscience, a man younger than yourself—a stranger, a foreigner, one who cannot possibly have the least interest in their welfare. You can afford to be happy, Marie! But I, who am a lonely woman in the world—who have no heart for love, or marriage, or happiness—who have devoted myself to

your children ever since their birth—who have had no other thought and no other care—I am trodden on by you as if I were a worm!”

The whole woman seemed on fire with passion now; her eyes glittered as the eyes of an angry serpent; her hands worked convulsively on the chain around her neck.

“But even a worm can turn round and sting, Marie. Do you think I have forgotten how you drove me from this house, merely because I showed you failing in duty as a wife? Granted that you were married almost a child to my brother, and that you did not love each other, had I not still the right on my side? Were you the only wife in the world who had an unfaithful

husband? Do you think I have forgotten how you injured me *once*—a long, long time ago, Marie?—but in my whole life I have had but one love and one hate, and I will be faithful to both till I die. You know whom I loved—you know whom I hate. I do not pretend to be better than I am—because you are religious and soft-hearted, do you imagine that you are less bitter than I, or that you would not rejoice if I fell down dead at your feet whilst I speak?”

“You have said enough,” broke in John, who was hurt and angry; “I will not stand here and let my wife be insulted. It is surely bad taste, madam, to talk in this way before a child of Carl’s age. We were happy

enough before you disturbed us—can you not leave us so?”

“I will leave you to your happiness when I have told my errand,” answered Carline, with stinging emphasis; “Marie, I have hated you long and bitterly—you have never tried to soften or conciliate me; and, for every injury I have done you, you have paid me back one hundredfold. Now let us cry quits, and stand on level ground. I will trouble you no more.”

She drew out of her reticule a small parchment roll, and held it open before John and Marie.

“Read it!” she added sternly. There was a silence of several seconds, during which her eyes wandered from husband to wife in lynx-like expectation. When

John raised his face, it was hot with indignation ; but Marie was calm as death.

“It is a trick !” he cried fiercely ; “a mean, lying trick !”

“Prove it to be so,” retorted Carline.

“Henderson, read it,” continued John ; “surely it will not require much proving.”

The document ran thus :—

“Further, I, the said Carl Maurice, Baron Weiler, name and declare Carline Weiler, my sister, to be sole guardian of my son till he attain the age of eighteen, if my wife, Hélène Marie, Baroness Weiler, should contract marriage during the mi-

nority of the aforesaid Carl Weiler, my son and heir.

“(Signed)

“CARL MAURICE,

“Baron Weiler.

In the presence of { “CARLINE WEILER.
 “LUDOVIC VON PERGER.
 “ERNST BUSS.

“Schloss Neutingen,
 Ludwigsburg, January 6th, 184—.”

It was properly signed and sealed; so far as the legal part of it went, there seemed no flaw; and from what I had seen of Carline, I feared she was not the kind of woman to play with dangerous tools. She was too keen and far-sighted to allow herself a momentary triumph, when a greater humiliation must come after. Still, Carl's welfare and means of

happiness should only be surrendered after a hard struggle.

“It *shall* be proved!” exclaimed John, as he paced the room indignantly. “Where are your witnesses?—think you, madam, we shall give way till you have conquered the ground inch by inch? I would shed my blood rather than you gain so infamous a victory!”

“But I am a woman, and women cannot fight, however much they might wish to do so,” answered Carline, from between white lips. “Women can, however, see clearly to the root and pith of a thing. You demand witnesses—do you not see my own signature there? Ask your wife, who was her husband’s executrix. Ask her if she does not know, as well as I do, that the Oberst von Perger

and Herr Buss are still living, not two hours journey from here? Pshaw!—will you be so unreasonable as to pretend to doubt the genuineness of the paper? If so, I am quite willing to have it proved. It is no more true that I stand here living before you, than that you have divided Carl from Marie as much as if he were dead!”

As before a sudden stream of lightning Marie staggered backwards, pale, dazed, blasted, by the torture of the words. With his quick, strong tenderness, John placed her in a chair, encircled her with his arms, whispering,

“My wife—trust me!—is not my love to you more than anything else in the world?—lean on it, rely on it—and be strong!”

She sat for some minutes, with her trembling hands over her eyes, sobbing tearlessly, and gasping like a drowning person. When she looked up she met Carline's gaze, and something in it, whether of triumph, or passion, or revenge, I cannot say, acted on her as a charm. Rising to her full height, and rearing her delicate spaniel head with a proud despair, she faced Carline, as a stag will sometimes face the dogs, and die rather than be hunted any longer.

At first she spoke very calmly.

"You were right in saying that we should cry quits, and stand on level ground, Carline. I do not think you will have any occasion to reproach yourself for having failed in showing your

feelings to me. Do you think my memory is worse than yours? From the first moment that I set foot in this place—a young girl without a friend in the world—who tried to poison my husband's heart (never too loving) against me?—who set herself to turn my children from their mother?—But we shall hardly stand on level ground yet, Carline. Remember that you injured me, and worked for my unhappiness, because you disliked me. Did I ever injure you intentionally? You cannot say that I did. I do not deny that your presence and memory are alike hateful to me, but I would never move an inch out of my way to cause you the pain of a pin-prick!”

She laughed—have not people laughed on the scaffold?—and continued :

“What do you gain by this piece of acting? Will the hatred and contempt that must fall on your head so plentifully help you to sweeter sleep or smoother days? Are you too happy, that you will thus torture yourself every hour, every minute of the day, by the witness of your crime? Has your life been so good and so pure that death will be too easy without some curse to haunt it? I am a Christian woman, and would not sully the ears of my child, or my own lips, with the words that fit your cruel, cowardly sin; but, in my heart of hearts, the hatred of it is deeper than any love can ever be—God forgive me for it! Well, go; if it is proved that Carl belongs to you, take him—take him, and be happy. You have won my chil-

dren from me so honestly, so nobly, Carline, that you cannot fail to be very happy. Think you that my sorrow and despair would have humiliated me to supplicate from you? Never. By Heaven, if I stood alone here to-day—if the love of my Carl and my husband had both fallen from me—if you had the power to take them from my sight, never to be mine in the spirit or in the letter again—I would not stoop to you! Torture me, persecute me as you will, whilst I live I will be as strong as yourself.”

How grand she was in her righteous anger! She did not tremble outwardly, but if you looked closely there was that quivering of the delicatest nerves that you will see in a fine Arab horse after the excitement of racing; her eyes, face,

voice, seemed to burn Carline with their passion of scorn; all the energy and fire of her finely organised temperament were concentrated into one passion.

Carline made no answer, but her face had changed its expression at every new sarcasm of Marie's; and she looked more like the slave than the conqueror.

"After all, Marie," she said, at last, with an attempt to be indifferent, "Carl is much more likely to be well cared for with me. An aunt is a fitter guardian for a child than a step-father any day; and, however much you may see fit to vituperate me, please remember that your unhappiness is entirely brought on by yourself. Hermine loves me, and has long belonged to me; but I would never have quarrelled with you about Carl had

you not taken this most unwarrantable and unmotherly step. Carl, listen to me. I am henceforth your guardian; and I am sure that you will love me as you did in your early childhood. No one can be tenderer and kinder to you than I shall be; but if you feel that I am unjust in taking you from your mother, remember that I never should have done so had she not, by marrying again, proved herself unworthy of being your protector and guide. Besides, Carl, think how much happier and more independent you will be with me, than here under the control of one who cannot possibly care a straw for you."

Suddenly Carline paused, and her cruel words were caught up by Marie, who had drawn Carl closer to her.

“Carl, we are parting. What I say to you now you must cherish as if I spoke it on a dying bed; you must never forget it whilst I am separated from you. The home to which you are going will be, no doubt, a happy one; you will be caressed, and petted, and carefully taught; *she—she who hates me* will be kindest to you of all. When she kisses you, Carl—when she calls you her darling, and folds you to her arms—remember that she hates me. Say to yourself when she is kindest—when you are most inclined to love her—she would kill my mother if she could; she broke my mother’s heart. She will tell you I am heartless, she will try to embitter you against me; be strong—do not be conquered. Rather bear any unkindness and

trials than be a traitor to me. Do you hear me, Carl?—you would be a traitor to me; and I love you so that I would die for you. Oh! Carl, I am childless—and she has done it all! But we shall triumph yet, if you are faithful to me; when you are a man you will be my own again—all my own.”

The noble bosom heaved, the thrilling pathetic voice broke down.

“My love, my darling!” she cried, twining her arms around him, bringing him close to her heart, “must I lose you? Oh, my child, be faithful to me! Think how I love you, how lonely I shall be——”

Carl seldom cried when he was in sorrow, and he fully comprehended his sorrow now. With a fine sensitiveness

that he inherited from his mother, he did not now turn upon John, but whilst caressing Marie, held one hand to him, saying,

“It serves me rightly, Mr. John, because I have felt so jealous of you. I know you will forgive me now that mama is unhappy, and I know that if anyone can comfort her you can. *Machchen*, do not look so white; do you think I could ever love anyone as I love you?”

He spoke not a word to Carline. The boy was too proud to do anything which might be taken as an act of conciliation. Marie had won the victory.

But it was the victory of martyrdom.

When the parting came next day, I heard a heart-rending shriek, a despairing voice—"Oh, husband, comfort me!"—followed by a deathlike silence.

That shriek haunts me still! Once again in my life, and only once, was it my lot to hear such another, and that was in the Morgue, when a widow woman discovered the drowned body of her son lying there.

CHAPTER IV.

HAD my friendship for Marie and my love for Carl been a whit less sincere than they were, I never could have acted so against my feelings as to solicit the situation of tutor from Carline. But when I saw how Marie's heart was well-nigh breaking under the daily anxiety that oppressed it, how she grew pale and thin in spite of her efforts

to be resigned, how the only possible chance of her happiness, and, through hers, of John's, lay in me, my own aversion seemed a trifle too small to be considered. To ask a favour of Carline was easy enough when I had once made up my mind to it, but the acceptance proved to be far more difficult. It did seem hard to part from my Sophiechen just when she had set every thought in my heart to music, when she was just beginning to acknowledge that she loved me. But we were both hopeful; and though I was older than herself by many years, I was made of stuff which wears well. Sometimes 'tis an advantage to have that coloured hair which never turns grey, and that kind of figure which, algebraically speaking, is

curvilinear and never rectangular. There is something, too, in having no whiskers, if the face be inclined to plumpness. I will say nothing of a certain private leave-taking, in which a spectacled grammarian behaved like a spooney, and a blithe little maiden—"die ist mein Leben mein Gut und mein Geld"—wetted her rosy cheeks with honest tears. Nor will I repeat Otilie's farewell words, kind and generous as they were, nor my aunt's lengthened specifics for nervousness, in case I might be attacked. The Colonel presented me with a box of cigars, which he told me had been purchased a great bargain at the Fair (certainly, if they cost only the trouble of bringing them home they were dear at the price), and whispered in my ear

at the last moment, "Eile mit Weile—the old rat shall have the young one yet."

I received instructions to join the family at Frankfort, where Carline had hired a furnished house for the winter, in that pretty, open, villa-dotted Grünebergweg, overlooking the antique Dom and the grey Eschenheimer Thor, and the Anlage always so gaily besprinkled with children. Hermine was the first to welcome me. In spite of the mutual wrangling which had taken place at our last meeting, she was all smiles and graciousness, touched very lightly on my unfortunate want of faith in her, and the circumstances of Carl's removal from Weiler—said many friendly little speeches,

which come always so pleasantly from the mouth of a lady—in fine, made me feel that I was at home and among friends. Why was Hermine so forgiving to me? Had she discovered that once the touch of her hand and the sound of her voice had well-nigh set my heart on fire? Did she still think I was her willing slave? I know not. Certainly, I never saw any one who could so readily wound and heal. It seemed as though she had two natures alternately masterful—one beautiful, womanly, beneficent—the other, ungentle, tyrannical, heartless. Ormusd and Ahriman warred within her, and as yet neither had obtained empire. Her impulses were good, her sympathies were ever excited by anything noble and exalted. She had an inherent

abhorrence of evil in the abstract, but unfortunately she had not the sweet patience which enables other women to overcome all things, and the soft touch which will feel the right way even if the eyes are blindfolded. Circumstances, no doubt, she would plead, had made her what she was, but she would have been the same under an infinite variation of circumstances.

It was evident that she ruled the household. I was surprised to find how passive and unobtrusive Carline could be in her own home. She was inconsistent at times in her behaviour to her visitors, to myself, to the servants, and to the two beings in the world that she loved, Hermine and Carl, but she was rarely passionate or angry. In her love of the

latter there was something singularly concentrated and earnest. She humoured them to the utmost, lavished gifts upon them, grudged every moment that they spent out of her sight, and when they were with her, seemed jealous of every look and word that they bestowed on others. Marie's name was never mentioned in her presence. The veto had even been put upon Carl's writing to his mother; but was there not a kind old lady in a chocolate shop behind the Eschenheimer Thor, who received many and many a contraband letter?—do you think, dear ladies, that I was wrong in thus teaching Carl deceit? Oh! no—could you read one of those tear-bedecked, passionate, pathetic letters of Marie's, you would applaud me, I am

sure, for it is the sweet heritage of woman to know by instinct how far you may go in offending man without offending God.

“Hermine, when are you going to marry?” asked Carl one day when we were sitting together in the summer-house.

“Didn’t you hear Aunt Carline say yesterday that it must be put off for three months, because of the death of Prince Heutingsheim’s father?”

“And shall we stay here all that time?”

“Very likely. Don’t you like Frankfurt, Carl?”

“Yes, I don’t dislike it, but you know very well what I am thinking about.”

Hermine had been very gentle to Carl of late, and now she put her fair hand on his shoulder, saying with some tenderness :—

“She loved you, Carl ; I do not wonder at your thinking of her.”

“And Mr. Brown,” added Carl, impetuously. “Mr. Brown of course wants to go to Stuttgart to see——”

Her eyes lit.

“Hush, Carl, never mention *his* name to me. I ask Mr. Brown’s pardon, but much as I respect him, and value him as a real friend, I cannot think of his brother with patience.”

“I was not thinking of Mr. John,” answered Carl, “but of Sophie, Mr. Brown’s Sophie—don’t you know whom I mean ? ”

“How should I? Remember, Carl, I do not know so much of Mr. Brown as you do.”

“She is such a pretty girl, and Mr. Brown likes her so much. If he does not marry her, Hermine, I shall.”

“What nonsense!” she said, pettishly; “you forget that whilst you are growing to manhood, she will not stand still. How you delight in talking like a baby!”

Carl dived into his book again, rather indignantly; and Hermine commenced reading English to me. She was a quick but restless pupil, liking better to argue and cavil, where opportunity offered, than to make errors and be corrected. To-day she glanced once or twice at the reflection of her face

in the little mirror of the barometer which hung opposite to us ; and when our lesson was ended, said quite earnestly—

“ Is Sophie so very pretty, Mr Brown ? ”

It was a question that I should have found difficult to answer any one, especially Hermine.

Three months ! When we have become sedate, middle-aged men—when our romance has been smothered under school-bills for the little misses, and jacket-bills for our young Tommies and Harries—we look back upon youthful mole-hills, and think how foolish we must have been to have thought them mountains once ! We have had larger mountains since, but none of them have

crushed us more. Perhaps we have a little empty chair by the fireside, to remind us of Heaven, and make us weep the tears that will do us good—perhaps we have seen the one most beloved of all brought very low by sickness or watchings—perhaps our hands have proved inefficient bread-earners for the rosy mouths gathering round us. These are real troubles; but the other, the unreal one, the bitter-sweet of loving and being separated from your heart's new, lovely, hopeful darling—the passionate longing for one touch of the little, trembling hand, one kiss on the soft lips, one tone of the timid, loving voice—the weary days that dawned and brought her no nearer—was all this nothing?

We led a quiet life at Frankfort. Except that Hermine went into society a good deal, I should have been as entirely shut out from the exterior world as in the lonely old Schloss; but our household had none of that cheerfulness of solitude which always made Weiler so delightful. If Hermine was not at home, Carline was miserable; and if Hermine was dull or unoccupied, we all more or less felt the consequences. When unhappy herself, it seemed impossible for her to let us be happy; sometimes her impertinences and sharp sarcasms roused me into a passion in spite of myself, at which I was angry enough afterwards, as it evinced her power. By being enraged with a pretty, capricious woman, you compliment her,

and I had no wish to do homage to Hermine. She was not a coquette, but she was dangerous both as an enemy and as a friend. In her *clear-skied* days, she had too much pleasure, and too many friends, to care to quarrel with me—but when the mercury fell, she kept at home, and I had to brighten my arms. I laugh now to think of those encounters. At the time, they were often unwelcome and perplexing. Did Hermine wish to bring me to her feet, or to make me her enemy? I could not tell. I was inclined for peace, but a neutral part I found to be an impossibility. Happily, however, I effected something very like a treaty of peace between the brother and sister; if the reconciliation was only in the letter at

first, might it not become so in the spirit one day? At least a step was gained.

Thus the winter passed away. One of John's letters to me will aptly close the year's history.

“Schloss Neutingen, January 2nd.

“DEAR OLD HENDY,—You complain that I do not write often enough — of what use to tell you the same things over and over again? Then Marie sends you such long letters, that I am sure you must know our movements and affairs by heart. Hendy, are her letters *all* about Carl?

“I think I have told you a dozen times how you saved her heart from breaking by remaining with Carl; but

I must be always telling you of it, for it was so unselfish, so good, so plucky of you. Dear old boy, when I think of the Sophiechen, I wonder at it more and more, and the wonder and gratitude give me a queer feeling about the eyes sometimes. I feel as if I should like to let all the world know what a brick you are! If I were only half as good, if I could only do something to show you how I feel towards you!—but I can never do that.

“Marie, however, has a plan which she wishes me to unfold to you; and which, coming from her, I know you will approve of. She thinks that it is high time for you to be married and settled and comfortable. The Colonel would never object to Sophie’s tempo-

rary absence from Stuttgart, and, as daily tutor to Carl, you would not be more engaged than if you were professor in an academy or the principal of a school of your own. The income you get now is insufficient for two, and Sophiele, as Frau Professorin, must have all necessary comforts and dignities. In fine, you must be married, and your home must be cosy. You cannot object to your little wife receiving a small dowry from Marie, who loves her for her own sake as well as yours. Marie holds up her slender hand, and smiles (as only my wife can smile), saying, 'Tell him he dare not object. He knows me better.' Of this more anon. She will write to you herself in a few days.

“ We returned from Wiesbaden last week, and I think shall not hurry to leave this place. I am sure Marie’s health is already better since coming here. You know how she likes quiet ; indeed, I doubt whether Wiesbaden did her any good whatever. Do not imagine from this that I am alarmed about her? She says, indeed, she is quite well, takes horse exercise, accompanies me to the forest on hunting days, and has regained her fresh, lovely colour—still she is always delicate. When I think of all she has suffered in consequence of her love for me, how can I show her sufficient tenderness and devotion? And, Hendy, I cannot tell you, you can never know, how she loves me, and relies upon me. If she does pine

for Carl, should I not be a selfish brute to reproach her for it? Can I expect her to be light-hearted and gay whilst she is separated from him? Everything else that a wife can be she is—gentle, unselfish, affectionate, sympathetic, sweet-tempered, yet firm and energetic. Having all this, ought I not to feel contented? But till she is happy I shall never be so.

“You will say, Hendy, that if I had common human gratitude, the love of such a woman would be enough for me; but I have not common humanities. I never could receive good gifts as other people do, without questioning, and with a mute thanksgiving. Till Marie smiles as she used to smile in the first days of our married life, I

shall feel that even in loving her I am a criminal.

“You have doubtless heard from your Sophiele that she has visited us here with the Colonel and my aunt. Ottilie could not be prevailed upon to come. When I called in the Weimar Strasse a few days since she was very cold to me. Can you explain this? I cannot. We were formerly such good friends.

“You ask me what I do all day. It takes longer time to enumerate *horæ subsecivæ* than whole days of labour. How hard your work is compared with mine! To me, nothing could be more irksome than a tutorship; the trammels of it would make me grow despicable in my contempt of self; but you, with ten times my learning, and a thousand

times my wisdom, wear them with as much dignity as the burgomaster his robes. What an enviable fellow you are, old boy! You despise nothing; and, under any circumstances, you would never be despised.

“First, for my business. I have transactions daily and hourly with the amtmann, the head forester, and the woodcutters. What people these Württembergers are! They may well say *Silly Suabia*, for you could hardly fancy such sleepiness, cunning, and indolence to be possible, as I witness daily among the working-classes. If I had not to deal with such a slothful, dawdling set, I should take an immense interest in the management of both estates. As to amusements, there are plenty. Shooting, hunting, sledging,

skating (how these Germans tumble!); and, in-doors, books, music (did you know that Marie plays and sings with great taste?) billiards, etc. But the mere intercourse with a mind so cultivated, and with a nature so sweet and gifted as hers, would alone suffice to make a home perfect.

“Well, have I anything more to say? I think not, except that the grand work is one of my articles of belief, and that I see you now hailed by the critics as the most learned and original commentator on German literature the age has produced! *Leben recht wohl*, Herr Professor. Marie’s heart is always yours. *Addio.*”

At last the spring came. We were to

return to Württemberg, with the “*grata vice veris et Favoni*,” when the wood-choir tune their throats for the melodious nuptials of earth and summer. With us, also, the spring was a time of promise and potential happiness. The first blossoms of the year would be strewed on Hermine’s bridal path, and the notes of the cuckoo brought me nearer to Sophie. How I rejoiced at sight of the old, dreary town of Ludwigsburg! How beautiful everything seemed that lessened the distance between me and my darling!

CHAPTER V.

TO - MORROW is Hermine's wedding-day. The house is full, and busy, and disturbed, and Carl and I have hardly quiet enough for our easiest studies. We have been here a week now, and though Stuttgart is only an hour's journey by rail, and Schloss Weiler could be easily reached in two on foot, I have not yet seen my Sophiechen, or John and his wife.

Carline watches us like a cat. I almost hate the woman, as she peers at us now and then from her window, or wanders about the garden, when we are walking on the hills above. On the first morning of our arrival, she called me to her room, and, pointing in the direction of Weiler, said, with an expression I shall never forget—

“Mr. Brown—you have done your duty to Carl, and you shall see that I am by no means ungrateful; but if I find that for one minute only you betray the confidence I place so implicitly in you—you understand what I mean—we part. Whatever you may think or feel on the subject, you will discover that only by acting with me you can possibly serve Carl’s interests. To

him I am and will be *everything*. Remember that, and be wise!"

Bah! It makes me sick to think that I stood, with the sunlight on my face, and listened to that woman. Could she have read my heart?—alas! for Carl and Marie!—but I loved them both so dearly, and I put on a mask for their sakes.

The day that I speak of was bright, though still cold, and I had private reasons for taking a long walk in the morning, so that when Carline peeped into the study before her dinner she might find us with our legs stretched out on chairs, and our books open, apparently for a good afternoon's work. No sooner, however, did the steam of the soup in the corridor greet my nos-

trils, and I heard Carlina's grace, with its accompanying *namens Vaters*, &c., through the half-open door, than I shut my Tacitus.

"Carl," I whispered, "we shall have no more study to-day. Put on your cap and come with me."

He opened his fine eyes inquiringly. Meeting mine, he caught my meaning at once. Without a word we let ourselves out of the window, that our footsteps might not be heard in the passage, and walked quickly towards the old Schloss gardens, where we picnicked so pleasantly on that summer day.

The *Dies Festi* of our lives need no reminder. Happiness will ever be sounding its own praises. With one finger she points to a spot she has

consecrated, saying imperiously, "What hast thou in the world but me?" To another she beckons like a syren, and her song is ever of her own charms.

We follow in the same path that we took that day, and look down into the hollow where old Gottlieb's summer hut stands. I can almost fancy I hear Otilie's pretty, commanding voice, as she called John to follow her in search of the key. How gaily her white skirt swept over the dewy turf! Poor, poor Otilie! We pass the Ruin, still speaking not a word, and enter the little thicket, where I found my Sophie in tears, where she confided in me and then—and then——

The silence of the wood, which was only broken by a robin's note, is suddenly overflowed with a cry of joy. A hand

—a woman's hand—is wildly thrown around the boy's neck—his long bright curls are drawn close—oh ! close—to a beating, swelling bosom.

The deep, unutterable happiness which follows is more than I can bear to witness. Leaving them, I turn a little aside, not so far, however, but that I hear their tears and broken words. I sat down on a felled tree, and thought that the world had never seemed so beautiful to me as then.

“Henderson, my brother !”

What was I—what had I done that she should have spoken to me so ? Taking both my hands in hers, letting her tears fall on them like rain, kissing them, my rough thick hands with her soft lips, pressing them to her heart, she

said, in a voice which will never die from my heart,

“Henderson, you are so good, I could kneel to you!—my brother, my friend, my good angel! It is so much more difficult to be noble in the way that you are, Henderson—in a way that has no honour, and no reward—in a way that is beset with humiliations, and mean, miserable hinderances!—let my tears thank you, Henderson, better than my lips ever can, for all that you have done and suffered for me.” Her voice broke down beneath the impetuous current of her feelings, and, I think, for some minutes neither of us could have spoken had we tried.

Did I kiss those slender white hands,—did I break the silence by a few

rough words of sympathy?—did I call her my sister, and tell her that I would never forsake Carl? — I know not — I only know that, after I had spoken, she raised her head and looked into my face with the clear, steadfast gaze of the Marie of old.

Then I saw that she was much changed. The smooth fair brow showed the working of restless nights and unhappy days; the soft pea-blossom on her cheeks was nearly gone, the bright arch lips seemed as if they had almost forgotten how to smile. Yet how beautiful she was still! Even such grief could not dim her perfected womanhood.

“You must not gaze at me so sharply, Herr Professor,” she said, in her old spirited manner, “because I do not look

well to-day, and am rather overwrought; do not think I am unhappy or have been pining. We are too proud and brave for that, are we not, Carl?"

"I think you have not been quite happy without me, mama; you have often cried—I know you have. Oh! mother, mother, how unjust, how tyrannical of Aunt Carline to keep me away from you!—if it were not for Mr. Brown, though she is so kind to me, I should have run away, not because I am wretched, or because Hermine tries to quarrel with me, but it is not right, it is an injustice to us both, and I cannot bear to be in any one's power as I am in hers. I am only a boy, but I feel like a man about that."

His colour rose, and he stamped pas-

sionately on the turf, as if he had been Clytemnestra over the body of Agamemnon.

“She is kind,” he continued; “we do as we like, and I have a horse to ride, but she watches us as if we were thieves or spies. I cannot hate her—how can I, when she seems to love me so much? She makes us all hypocrites. That is the worst of all.”

“We must look to the time when you will be all my own again, Carl,” answered Marie with kindling eyes, “my brave, high-spirited boy, my darling, I think I shall be too happy then.”

“And when shall I see you again, mama?”

It was as if the sun were withdrawn on a sudden. She tried to smile, but

failed utterly, as she looked in my eyes for an answer.

“I will write—it shall not be long, trust me, but you must not be disappointed at delay. The wedding——”

“Hermine’s! oh! if I might see her, and give her my blessing! My poor, poor child!”

“She looks so beautiful in her wedding gown, mama, she fitted it on last night, and she said to me—‘Carl, am I as pretty as mama?—did she look like this in *her* wedding dress?’”

“John was out when your letter came,” Marie said to me, “or he would have been here; but you will often see him if you stay in Stuttgart—and you are to be so wondrously happy with the Sophiechen!”

She broke off and turned to Carl, as if grudging every thought and look bestowed on anything else. Time that is golden passes very quickly. When I looked at my watch, I found that we had only five minutes longer to stay. Coffee was always sent into our study at four o'clock, and Carline often accompanied it with the daily paper and a plate of biscuits. Though she had visitors to-day, there was no reason to suppose she would make an exception on that account.

Marie turned very pale. Carl, with his arms around her neck, kissed her again and again, whispering boyish words of endearment and consolation. The robin sang on the tree near us. Could anything have been more peaceful than

that scene—more tumultuous than those two beating hearts?

No words of parting were said—but when I rose, Marie flung the boy's arms from her neck with a tearless face; she did not kiss him any more, but turned away with a hasty convulsive movement, as if she trod on hot lava. Catching my hand in hers, the sad eyes looked at me with an unspeakable expression of love and trust—the lips tried to frame a sentence but failed utterly. Without looking back, she hastened towards the entrance-gates.

CHAPTER VI.

WE returned by the Ruin, and were seated at our books precisely as coffee was carried into the salon. But I had something to say to Carl then, that I deemed of more importance in his education than the manners of the ancient Germans.

“We won’t begin Tacitus yet,” I said,
“I want to talk with you a little.

Tell me, Carl, have I done right in this matter, or have I done wrong?"

"Wrong!—oh, Mr. Henderson, that cannot be!"

"Think for a moment, Carl; it was an act of deceit, and it was a violation of duty—you will admit that."

"No, I will not. Is not mama to be considered before Aunt Carline?"

"But looking upon things in their moral light, without any consideration of persons, you must admit that an act of deceit is virtually wrong."

"Not always."

"And why not?"

"I do not know how to express my meaning, but in some cases I feel quite sure that it is pardonable to conceal things not wrong in themselves, though

they would be thought so. Do you think, if I had been a Jacobite in the time of Oliver Cromwell, and your poor outlawed Charles had secreted himself in my house, that I should have hesitated in saying, 'He is not here,' to the Puritan soldiers?"

"But tell me, Carl, should such difficulties occur in the future as have occurred to-day—should two paths of duty lie before you — what would guide you in your choice?"

"How can I tell? I should be guided somehow."

"Think again, Carl—it is no light matter to be trusted to a *somehow*. If you try to steer a vessel towards two harbours, you will surely dash against the rocks."

“But we cannot have two hearts, Mr. Henderson; and I feel sure *your* heart led you to the Ruin to-day.”

“You are right, my boy. The heart, as God has made it, is infallible always, Carl. A wise man once said: ‘A man never gives God an offence if he does that which reason requires;’ but a kinder and therefore a wiser man, in our own day, has written: ‘God has written his religion in the heart, for growing wisdom to read perfectly, and time to make triumphant.’ Never let your benevolence and your impulses to good be narrowed by any theory of virtue. The heart is larger than the wisdom or morality of the world can ever be; and though I would have you staunch to your honour as a Roman, I would

have you gentle and humane as Christ. Therefore, Carl, when you are in a strait, not knowing whether to obey the heart or the understanding, you will find that it is the heart always that leads to God."

When we entered the salon at tea-time, we found it full of visitors, all strangers to me except one, namely, Count Cress. He was sitting by the side of Hermine, talking to her in his silky, lazy way; but the conversation was not so absorbing as to prevent him from making me a profound bow.

"Have I the honour to see the Herr Professor well? And this is your brother, Hermine?—why have we not known each other before, Count Carl?"

“You should have come to Frankfort in the winter; why did you not?” said Carl quickly.

Hermine’s eyes fastened on the Count as he replied with composure,

“I was in Austria, in Bavaria, in Hungary, my young friend—all those places are at some distance from Frankfort.”

“Why did you go there?”

“It would take rather too long to tell. There would be dry details about salt mines and sugar factories and forests, which your sister could not listen to patiently. I will tell you some other time.”

I was so taken aback at seeing Count Cress in the light of Hermine’s betrothed, that, unconsciously, my eyes had been

riveted on him from the moment of entering. Hermine noticed this, and, coming across to me, said in a low voice,

“Do you know Prince Heuting-sheim?”

“I have seen him when he was Count Cress.”

“Was that his name before his father died? What do you know of him?”

There was no fear of our dialogue being overheard, for a buzz of conversation had arisen at the tea-table; and Carl and the Prince were busy on the topic of Wielicza salt-mines. Hermine's sharp glance cut to my thoughts as true as steel.

“You have before known something about him. It is useless for you to

hesitate—I see it in your face. Can you say it here?”

“No.”

She returned to her seat without replying, and entered into the subject of salt mines. For half an hour she sat by his side talking, smiling, as was her wont, sprinkling on everything and everybody discussed a satire as fine and cutting as diamond dust. No one could have supposed that she was agitated and impatient. When she rose, and Carline looked up inquiringly, she said to me without a tremor.

“Mr. Brown, will you kindly select those English books you offered to lend me, that I may give them to Ernestine to pack? I will come and point them out to you.”

I followed her into my little study and shut the door. She turned very pale, but eyed me steadily as I placed a chair for her; though, I think, if I had not held out my hand, she would have fallen in her effort to reach it.

“Mr. Brown, will you listen to me; and when I have said all that I want to say, that I must say, will you speak to me, and help me, as if I were Carl?”

The words came slowly but firmly, and I could see with what effort at self-control.

“You are the only friend in whom I can trust—and I am very lonely—if you only knew how lonely and miserable I am!”

Tears came now. Covering her face

with her hands, and rocking herself to and fro, she sobbed as if her heart were breaking.

“Do not come near me!—do not speak to me!” she cried passionately; “I know you would be kind, but I cannot bear kindness now! Rouse me to anger, to defiance, or to coldness, if you will—I would thank you for it!—I cannot be pitied or consoled!”

I do not know how long she wept, but when she looked up her face was calm, and her voice steady.

“I must not be weak any longer—time is precious, and I have much to say,” she said in a quiet, mechanical voice. “What I have to tell you, Mr. Brown, must be told now or never. I have heard that, when people are dying,

all their past life, down to the most trifling acts and occurrences, passes before their eyes. I think that, when women marry those whom they neither love nor respect, they must become morally dead, if not virtually ; for this afternoon I have seen my life photographically, as it were ; I have seen myself as I am, and other people as they are, and not as they appear to be. Well, I suppose I am not worse than other women, who sell themselves, body and soul, to a title, or to an establishment ; but I do not love or respect myself, Mr. Brown, a whit the better after that photography. Looked at from a very distant point of sight, it seemed so pleasant and enjoyable a thing to be a Princess, and visit at courts, and always have

variety and elegancies ; but now, when I stand on the brink of all these—when I know that what I give up to-morrow will never, never be restored to me—that, for my liberty and girlhood, I shall only get chains and responsibilities, and a grand home without love—I stand back and shudder. From the first I knew that Prince Heutingsheim did not love me—at our betrothal I knew it. He admired me, he thought me pretty and clever, and just fitted to be the mistress of his house—but that was all. I never loved him ; he was gentlemanly, good-tempered, agreeable ; we should seldom quarrel, or come in each other's way. I thought that would do. You must have known I did not love him, by the fact of his never coming

to Frankfort. I coaxed Aunt Carline into not asking him, and she was easy enough about the question of our caring for each other, thinking when we were married we should be happy. Perhaps I should have married him—perhaps, we might have been tolerably happy, if ——”

She stopped suddenly, and a deep blush burned her cheeks.

“Must I tell you the rest? Oh! why will men humble us so much? Whatever faults we may have, we do not hurt them as they hurt us—we may be wilful, and captious, and unforgiving—we may not give them our deepest, first love, but we come to them pure—we are honest before God. Very likely, Prince Heutingsheim may not be

worse than the generality of men who marry pure women, and make mediocre husbands; but I am not made of such stuff. as to be bowed down to the dust, and rise again. This man"—she laughed a bitter, sobbing laugh—"this man who kissed my lips to-night, lips that no man ever kissed before—this Prince Heutingsheim—is already married in the spirit, if not in the letter. To-day I have seen his mistress and his children."

The words were dashed from her lips as though they were fire.

"She loves him—her heart is breaking for him," she continued in a quieter tone; "and she has clung to him faithfully for ten years, kept up by the hope and promise of becoming

his wife at his father's death. Good God! when she told me what she had suffered, what she could readily suffer for him—how base, how utterly contemptible I felt in the thought that I, who was young, and fresh, and nobly born, could throw away my soul in exchange for a few things well thought of in the world; whilst she could leave the innocent home of her youth, could wait through long years of disappointment, and vexation, and shame, for her dear love's sake! I, with all my education and refinements, felt coarse, and vile, and heartless before this woman. It was she who had the noble soul—the strong woman's heart. I think I could have fallen on her neck and kissed her, had she not been so proud, so chilling

in her confidence. Only once, when she spoke of him, she melted to softness; but it was a softness that divided us more. She is so handsome too—so superbly handsome, I felt like a painted doll beside her. How I hate myself that I could be thus humbled!”

She was silent for a moment, whilst a tear fell.

“You knew of this before? — you have lived in the house he purchased for her?”

“Yes.”

“Why did you not tell me?”

“You forget that I only knew him as Count Cress; his other title was strange to me.”

“True; I ask your pardon. But had you known in time, tell me, Mr. Brown,

would you have prevented me from marrying him?—would you have so far troubled yourself for me?”

“I think so”

With a new, strange energy she rose, and gave me her hand.

“Perhaps you are the best friend I have; I will be grateful to you if I can. I do not think I could say a thanksgiving to God now, my heart is so full of bitterness; but you must wait and trust me. And now I want your help and advice, for the worst is not yet over. You have been very true to my mother—you have been true to Carl—will you forsake me when I need you more than all? Whatever may happen, I will die rather than marry Prince Heuting-

sheim. I well know what I bring on myself by a refusal—for my aunt's heart has long been set upon this marriage; but if I had to walk through fire to purchase my freedom, I would do it. Yesterday I should have given him my hand, and perhaps have passed through life without one thought above the level of my old self; but to-day I feel otherwise. If I cannot have a complete and noble love, I will live at least self-respected. I will not stoop to be lower than his mistress."

She put her hands over her temples, and turned to a deadly whiteness.

"My aunt loves me devotedly, entirely, but she has no pity for those who act against her, and the gossip and scandal of a sudden break between the

Prince and myself, on the eve of our marriage, will be torture to her. Mr. Brown, help me—stand by me——”

Before I could reply the door was opened quickly, and Carline peeped in, asking, with a light laugh, the reason of our long absence.

CHAPTER VII.

No sooner had Hermine's broken words explained the cause of her agitation than Carline signed to me to leave them.

"Let nothing shake you—be firm as a rock!" I whispered to Hermine, and went away, vaguely wishing to help the unhappy girl, but not knowing by what means I could do so. I did not return to the salon. I had no inclination for society

now, and, sitting down in Carl's bedroom, waited in impatience the issue of the interview. My heart was very heavy for Hermine. A new page had been opened to me in the book of woman's life—a page of mingled pride and humiliation—of strength and weakness—of high moral purpose and personal degradation. I had not thought till now how easily a young girl, possessing a conscious appreciation of all that is good and noble, may fall step by step from her innately pure nature, missing so much in the eyes of heaven, perhaps losing nothing in those of the world. A man who holds a woman's love lightly will never be loved worthily—but a woman who considers her youth, her beauty—oh, God! her innocence

even—as barter for gold, jewellery, and position, sinks so low as to forfeit the very privilege of being able to love.

I do not know how long I waited, but Carl came to bed and dropped fast asleep, and one or two of the guests passed through the corridor to their sleeping apartments before the door of my study opened.

Carline walked with her usual soft step towards the salon; then all was silent. Some minutes passed and no one sought Hermine. Would she expect me? Would she want me? I went to the door and knocked softly. A faint “Herein” permitted me to enter.

Hermine was kneeling on the ground, with her face buried in the sofa-cushion, weeping bitterly. There was something

so humble, so despairing, so utterly lonely in her attitude, that I involuntarily put my arm around her, as if she had been a child, and said:—

“You must not do this—at least, I can help you as much as tears can.”

She did not shake off my touch, but raised her face confidingly and gratefully.

“It is very good of you; I have no one to care for me now; Carl does not love me—Aunt Carline does not, and I left my mother for *her*. Oh! Mr. Brown, Henderson, tell me what I must do. She has been so cruel—you do not know how cruel she can be!—she who took me from my mother.”

“Be calm, dear Hermine, and tell me everything. This agitation will render you unfit to use your judgment. Sit

down by my side, and talk to me as to a brother."

Her brave spirit only needed such a spur. With a great effort she calmed herself, and narrated to me clearly and concisely the interview between herself and Carline. Without flinching, she told me how she had gone down on her knees to the proud, worldly-minded woman, who, when she saw that Hermine was resolved at any risk to break off the marriage, had never relented, by look, or word, or tear, from her first decision.

"If you will persist in this folly," she said, without the movement of a muscle, "you will ruin your prospects and bring me into ridicule, besides compromising me in the highest degree.

You know how liberally I have advanced you as the wife of the Prince, and what a splendid position you will hold in the court of King Max; by breaking your promise you will not only injure yourself, but the Prince. He is attached to you, and it is a mortifying thing for a man to be jilted, more especially when the marriage promises to be so suitable. As to that woman, do you mean to say, Hermine, that you are such a fool as to believe all she says?—or that the Prince is an exceptional case, if he has sowed his wild oats? Pshaw! he no more promised to marry her than other men promise to marry every woman who is bold enough to drag them into a *liaison*. And because the affair happens to come

to your ears, do you suppose it is a rare occurrence, or a thing to make a girl shudder and tremble as you do? Be reasonable; the Prince is amiable, accomplished, and worthy in every way; moreover, you are betrothed to him. Dry those tears, and show the good sense that I have always given you credit for."

"When she said this," continued Hermine, "I could no longer be meek and supPLICATE. I stood up, and asked her why she had loved me, and brought me up to no better end?—I reproached her for her kindness even. I am afraid I was very ungrateful and bitter. I could not help it, her words hurt me so—she seemed to think I had no soul, no woman in me. My heart

hardened against her, not because she showed herself to be so hard, but because she spoke so lightly, so scoffingly of what is sacred. Good Heaven! has she no heart, no instinct of gentleness?—am I no more to her than a statue, to be sold for the most it will fetch? Are we women all so bad, Henderson?”

Then she went on to tell me Carline's reply—how she wounded her in a hundred places with her own arrows thrown back again—how she bade her go, never more to see her face.

“And now,” said Hermine, with a face from which anger and pride had died away, “I have no home!”

She looked at me long and earnestly, as a hurt animal will look, knowing

you can give help, though utterly unable to divine by what means.

“You cannot say that, Hermine. There is one whose love will always make a home for you—who will welcome you more joyfully than any words of mine can express.”

Starting up, the old defiant scorn in her eyes dazzled me.

“My mother?—I would work for my living rather than go to her! She never loved me as she did Carl—least of all can she love me now: from her sense of duty she would always receive me with kindness—from her heart she never could. Has she not a husband—*my stepfather*?—do you think I could subject myself to bear his pity or condescension? I tell you, never!”

“It is the only wise and right thing, Hermine; you *must* see the reasonableness of it.”

“Do not mention it to me, Henderson, I cannot bear it. I know well that all the love she had for me once, must be gone long ago; and even if not—if I felt sure she would rejoice to have me home again, I would never go to spoil their happiness. Had my mother not married again, it might have been different; but—Henderson, why will you make me think and say what I ought never to say of your brother? You must know how I feel towards him. No, I will take a governess’s place first. But you can help me. I know you can. Surely you have some friends who

would receive me for your sake. Be generous, and do not measure your kindness by my obedience. Remember you are my only friend."

"And because I am your friend I speak what I feel is right, though I know how unwelcome it is. Fräulein, will you never believe in my integrity?"

"If you knew all, you would never counsel me so—you cannot understand how painful such a step must be both to mama and myself—we are too divided now to unite again; and however much we try, we shall never be able to make each other happy. Do not think, Henderson, that I only listen to my pride—I am not so foolish as that."

“I ask you, Hermine, to look quietly and dispassionately towards the future. You are young, inexperienced, impulsive; are you fit to guide yourself, or, even if you were, can you ensure for yourself such an amount of love and care, so happy a home in fact, as will preclude the want of old ties? You are brave, but hardly brave enough to think of a lonely life (and who can tell that yours may not be so?), without one unfailing heart to turn back upon in sorrow or in sickness? Your education has hardly been that to fit you for such difficulties as an unprotected woman, especially a young woman, must necessarily encounter; for to women, Hermine, home is as sunshine to flowers—they droop, and wither, losing

their sweetest attributes and instincts if shut out from the element which is their special heritage; and by breaking utterly from the sympathies of those whose blood runs in your veins, you begin life as if you were stranded on an unknown shore."

"I am as fit to guide myself as those who have hitherto guided me. You will at least acknowledge that I did not bring this unhappiness on my own head."

"I am not reproaching you, I only want you to see clearly where your first duty, and therefore your right home, lies."

"And you intend to help me to no other?" she exclaimed passionately; "tell me at once, since your words point to nothing else."

I was silent.

“I thought your English heart was broader than other men’s, and more able to comprehend the strength and self-government that a purpose calls forth in women. I thought, too, that your feelings were finer, and that you would know intuitively why we shrink from the delicatest contact with one whom we ought to love, yet cannot help always wounding — but you are all alike! Because men cannot be so cruel to each other as women can, neither can they be so tender; they act upon cold theories of virtue, and shrug their shoulders at a precedent, but are worse than we, who follow our good instincts, regardless of the consequences. You cannot be noble upon impulse. There-

fore I was wrong in thinking you could be my friend, Henderson. Well, I will act alone."

She turned as if to go, but, ere reaching the threshold, the sense of her loneliness seemed to overpower her, and sorrow was stronger even than pride.

"God forgive you!" she murmured with a burst of tears; "I did not think you could be so cruel."

I took her cold trembling hand.

"No, my child," I said gently, "I was only cruel for the best—by-and-bye you will listen to me more patiently. I am your true friend, Hermine — through everything you must believe that."

Without waiting to hear more she caught my meaning joyfully.

“And you will take me away from this place—to-night—before another hour? So long as I have shelter, and am with friends, I care not whither I go. Be quick, Henderson, do not keep me here!”

Ottilie, and the cheerful little household in the Weimar Strasse, first occurred to me; but the fact of Christine Hermann residing in the same house had immediately negatived it. I knew that the pious, simple-hearted Rosers, the good, old couple who loved Marie so dearly, would have welcomed her child; but they had gone to Heilbronn, and with their exception I possessed no friends in Stuttgart. In our frequent walking excursions, however, to the village of

Marbach last summer, Carl and I had made the acquaintance of the Herr Pfarrer and his family, kind-hearted, homely souls, whose regard for me I did not doubt could stand a trial *ex improviso*. Hermine consented to my plan without a question. It was a home—she could reach it to-night, that was enough for her. In a quarter of an hour's time we were standing in the dusty entrance of the Post Hof; whilst the lethargic post-boys, not much caring for a job that took them from their cigars and their Röseles, harnessed a couple of horses to a vehicle that was neither cart, nor gig, nor phaeton, but partaking of the nature of all three, without the comfort of either. It was about nine o'clock when we passed

over the rustic bridge of boats, and entered the village, with its dusty street and wooden steeple, which lay so prettily beside the willow-banked Neckar, and has become famous as the birthplace of the poet most dear to the Suabian heart.

The Herr Pfarrer Buss was an unmistakeably benevolent - looking man, with a flurried, shiny look, as if he were always in a hurry about something that he did not quite understand. His wife, who regarded everybody and everything in the world with affection, was stout, breathed through her nose, and invariably sat with a hand resting on each knee. There was also brother Ernst, an old officer possessing an immense amount of rigidity, and constituting in his own person the sword, gown, bar

and bench of the family; a daughter, Bäbele, still in her teens, and crude as to her manners; and a ten-year old Felixchen completed the circle, who, as we entered, were doing ample justice to an Abendessen of black bread and potatoe soup.

I satisfied their amazement as briefly as I could, by explaining that the young lady was under my care, and about to proceed to Heilbronn; in the meantime such accommodation as could be had at the village Inn, though quite *bequem* for me, was hardly suitable for a lady. My petition was granted before I could mention it; and Hermine, begging leave to retire, at once followed Bäbele upstairs. When she was gone, I told them, in so far as was neces-

sary, the circumstances which had brought us — for they recognised Hermine — and I well knew how soon they would hear from other and less reliable authorities the story of her sudden disappearance from Ludwigsburg.

The good people listened with unaffected concern — the Herr Pfarrer's sympathies all being on the side of the Baroness's daughter; his Frau Pfarrin dealing an equal measure of pity to the disappointed bridegroom elect. Brother Ernst looked very wise for some minutes, and finally delivered himself of a proverb, rather wide of application, this appearing to be his usual method of freeing himself from a difficult decision.

"What sayest thou, brother Ernst?" asked Pastor Buss, deferentially.

"Kommt Zeit, kommt Rath," ("Time will show a plan")—answered the family oracle.

"Yes, yes, brother?" said the Frau Pfarrin, half interrogatively.

"Aufgeschoben ist nicht aufgehoben," ("Omittance is no quittance")—continued Brother Ernst.

"Thou imaginest that Fräulein Weiler will think better of it, and become reconciled to the Baroness—true, brother Ernst. A good time to pray for—may the Lord prosper our prayers!" said the pious pastor.

Begging them to show Hermine all kindness for the short time she would remain under their roof, I hastened to

the Gasthof, where, in spite of an unpromising bed and a decidedly unpleasant atmosphere, I managed to sleep soundly. I had ordered the Rickey of the establishment to call me in the morning at six o'clock, but the sound of her milk-pails and morning salutations to the cows awoke me long before that time, and, dressing quickly, I called for coffee and bread, resolved to walk on in advance of the eilwagen.

What a birthplace for a Schiller is this Marbach! The village consists of a narrow street or two, on each side of which lies a heap of manure where the pathway ought to be, and a black pool issuing from it, through which the cows wade knee-deep whenever they are driven in or out of their sheds—these being in

reality the ground-floor compartments of the houses, master and beast sleeping under the same roof, and being almost as good friends as Tipperary Paddy and his pig. Wooden steps, with balustrades, lead up to the second floor, where the family live, and from the windows of which are hung red shirts and blue cotton chemises, with other articles of wearing apparel, to dry in the sun. From the back window of my room, the prospect of the steel-grey Neckar, winding amid pale green shallows and pink orchards, is pleasant enough, could I overlook the court intervening, where several women are washing linen, preparing sour-kraut, eating from dirty tin basins a comestible that shall be nameless, and feeding the pigs in company.

As I passed the Pfarrhaus I saw that all the windows were open except one—a little dormer which jutted into the boweriest part of the garden. Was Hermine asleep? Would she wake up with the same hard resolutions? Would the outward coarseness and homeliness of the life around her gall her luxurious nature, or would its simple goodness touch her heart? I knew not. I could only hope that she would draw back in the eleventh hour from casting herself on the mercies of a world too forgiving, and at the same time too unmerciful, for a nature like hers.

Pastor Buss and Brother Ernst were both at work among the garlic beds, and invited me to stay and partake of coffee; but the eilwagen was already

in sight, and I had no wish to exceed the leave of absence Carline had ungraciously granted me.

CHAPTER VIII.

“So geht es in der Welt zu!” exclaimed the Colonel, buttoned up to an extraordinary amount of wit and wisdom; “every man sets himself to catch a fish of some kind during his life, and mine was the Count. But he’s caught at last, the Lord be praised for it!—and if my name is my name he shall marry the Christine, not because he deserves her, but because he wants

somebody else. Ei, ei! Nephew Henderson, set a fox to catch a fox, and the very Herr Diabolus himself shall be outwitted!"

"I do hope," said my Sophie, with a bashful earnestness—"I do hope that he will marry Christine, papachen — she is so fond of him!"

"Mean, despicable wretch that he is! If I were Christine I would beg my bread rather than stoop to a man who had deceived me!" cried Ottilie, her pale cheek flushing as she spoke.

"But if she loves him she can forgive that, Ottilie."

"If she loves him — yes. She can hardly love him now, Sophie, she must hate him. I could wish a man dead who had treated me so."

My darling's little hand crept into mine.

"If you were as bad as Count Cress I am sure I should never hate *you*, Hendy," she whispered.

"But, my dear girls," resumed the Colonel, "it is very unfeeling of you to forget that Henderson has not yet heard how cleverly I managed the affair. Call your mama, Sophiele, for she likes to hear me tell the story over again."

"I think mama is busy in the kitchen just now, papa," said hypocritical little Sophie, who would have preferred to hear another person's story.

But the Colonel was impatient where his glory was concerned, and at his reiterated, "Go and tell your mama," she

saw there was nothing to do but to be patient and wait.

“I must tell you, Nephew Henderson,” began my uncle, when his audience had composed themselves to decorous silence, “that I have always felt a strong inclination to kick a man who goes a shilly-shallying with a decent woman. Damn it! if he wants to be dissolute (excuse me, my darlings), let him seek those whose morals are no better than his own—but I will hold that to entice a girl from her respectability, if she be an apple-seller only, is worse than all the common dissoluteness in the world. For that very reason, ever since I set foot in this house, which is four years ago last Martini, have I said to myself, ‘The Count is playing the devil with Christine,

and I will play the devil with the Count!’ I don’t dislike the man — Gott bewahre! But I love and admire the fair sex, my Henderson, and I made up my mind to help the beautiful Christine to a husband. And Count Cress and I *had* our little piques now and then, though of course we felt quite amicable and harmless towards each other at bottom. Well, to begin. You remember that, soon after your arrival here, the Count left for Munich, being sent for by his father, who was thought to be dying; he kept up a constant correspondence with Christine all the autumn, promising to come when he should be Prince Heutingsheim, and make her his wife. She’s a fine woman, clever, plucky, and as brave as a lion, but she grew impatient,

as those fine creatures will, and raged at the Count as if she were acting on the stage. The Volk's Fest began, as you are aware, on the twenty-ninth of September, and, meantime—‘Ein anderes Städtchen, ein anderes Mädchen,’ as the proverb says, he must have a lady-love in Bavaria as well as in Würtemberg; and this new flame was no other than the Fräulein Hermine, the young, the lovely, and”—(my uncle said this with his forefinger laid alongside his nose)—“*the rich!*—for, besides the ample fortune left her by her father, her aunt had promised a handsome dowry on her marriage. You know how artfully Count Cress managed to get Christine out of the way when he came to Stuttgart, but you don't know how artfully I contrived to put her in

the way just when he was going to be married so quietly to the rich young lady! Untreue schlägt ihren eigenen Herrn — if the Count had not been a rat I should never have turned weasel. I assure you I thought at one time I should have lost scent, but — Den muthigen gehört die Welt—the whole world belongs to the brave — and no sooner did I hear of his father's death than I set upon him myself, and set Christine upon him too. The woman acted like a Trojan; she peppered him with letters as sharp and hard-hitting as hailstones; and if Frankfort had not been so far off, I believe she would have gone there and inquired at every house till she found out the Fräulein Weiler. After Christmas his letters stopped—but she did not lose courage

yet, neither did I. 'Married or unmarried,' she cries, 'I'll find him at last.' Gerechter Himmel!—that a splendid creature like that should throw herself away upon a silky-haired, drawling dandy, whose only ambition is to grow chrysanthemums! Rickey would be too good for him, though she *is* rather the worse for the wear, and somewhat angular in her prominences. But, Henderson, to conclude: the Christine went to Munich—no Count; she came home—no Count; and we got into the month of April. See how the wind blew the scent straight to our noses! Last Thursday, my daughter (who lives at Ludwigsburg) sends a note to me to say Carline Weiler has come back, and report said that her niece was to be married next day. Off we set,

Christine and I—she crying and raging by turns, I all red and perspiring with the excitement of the thing. We went straight to my daughter's house; and from thence I sent the Fräulein a little note, saying that I was an old friend of her father's (a fabrication); and as I was lame of one leg, would she step across for five minutes to receive my blessing? May God forgive my lies, my Henderson, but I didn't know what to say; and it was clear to us that the only way of getting at the Count was through his betrothed. She came at once — a fair, erect, proud young girl, with large blue eyes, that said, 'Your business?' before her lips could speak. Ei, ei, ei! what a scene it was! The Christine was not so fine then,

for she was fool enough to shed tears; but the Fräulein Weiler stood fire like a sixty-year old Swiss Guard. 'Tis clear these elegant young ladies don't marry for love, or she never could have flung him off like a dirty glove, as she did, but that was all the better for Christine."

I do not know how long my uncle's story would have lasted, had not dinner luckily intervened, over which ceremony he was sparing of his words.

"So the matter rests," he concluded hastily; "instead of being married the next day, Count Cress got a severe rating from his mistress, who finally led him back to Stuttgart, like a dog with his tail between his legs. He didn't disturb himself to go after his bride-

elect—not he, lazy ass as he is; and if Christine has the wit I gave her credit for, he will soon have a wife with ten times his good qualities, and a thousand times his sense. Gott! how hot the soup is!”

The story for which my Sophiechen had waited so impatiently came later, when the Colonel went off to his club, and Ottilie persuaded my aunt that after their morning's labour in the Speisekammer, they were both too tired to accompany Sophie and myself into the Anlage. The April sun shone out warm and clear on the glistening green trees and white statuary, among which we wandered so selfishly, so foolishly happy!—but the bright tranquillity of the spring sky after rain was not more

beautiful or more potential of a happy summer to my heart, than the sunshine of my darling's innocent blue eyes after her first joyful tears were over.

I fear our story would find but few readers. Sorrow makes us yearn with outspread, helpless arms towards our fellow-men; we cannot have too much of their love, their counsel, their sympathy then. But when our Present is very fair, we grow egotistical and self-arrogant—our brothers are as strangers to us—we are independent of places also, and circumstances; for a time we are isolated from our old selves, on a bewitching Atlantis, only to be reached by the golden pinnaces of Youth and Love.

It was no small trial to leave that dear little circle, and return to our silent, dreary home at Ludwigsburg. Had Hermine left us under the happiest circumstances, we should have missed her blithe, imperious voice and ready humour. The very sound of her quick step and rustling skirts made you feel that you were in the neighbourhood of a pretty, capricious woman, and in the death-like torpor that followed her absence I forgot how often I had wished her away. There was no outward change in the house. Visitors came and went, and were received by Carline with her ordinary starch suavity; she talked at dinner-time to me, on diverse subjects, books, science, and adventures of life and travel, with her usual forcible

acuteness of understanding ; she was as precise as she had ever been in the elegant arrangement of her dress and furniture. But there was a change in the eyes of those who knew her well. Formerly she had loved argumentation, delighting to place a subject before you, as a dissecting demonstrator will change places with a pupil, and when the latter gives a wrong definition to the finest structured muscle, pulling him up with a sharp "What do you mean, sir?"—now she was easier content with your knowledge, and more forgiving to your ignorance. Formerly I had never heard her speak harshly, or even with pettishness, to the most provoking servant ; she was strict, but never out of temper, priding herself, I think, as many unfor-

giving people do, on a forbearance which is always as coldly and ungraciously received as it is given. Now, the misplacing of a dish, or the overspicing of a vegetable, would make her turn pale with anger, and send the unfortunate offender in tears to the kitchen.

Did her heart relent to Hermine? Was it on that account that she still lingered in the dull old town, hoping some sudden impulse would send her spoilt, beautiful darling back again? I do not know, but I think, if Hermine had come back then, she would have been forgiven. The Prince bore the affront very unlike a disappointed lover, and the storm of gossip and report no sooner rose than it died away. Besides, Hermine's wealth and* attractiveness

would have easily procured her such an alliance as to realize all the ambition Carline had formerly entertained for her. It was too much to lose all at once—the charm of her presence, the thought and care for her well-being, the interest in her future.

But days passed into weeks, and Hermine did not come.

CHAPTER IX.

Two or three of John's letters, received about this time, will best serve to connect the incidents of my story. I give them linked together in a narrative form, for the sake of uniformity:—

“Your letter did not arrive till we had heard of this wretched affair through our Herr Pfarrer, who, on his way to Ludwigsburg, stopped at

his friend Pastor Buss's, and to his amazement saw Hermine sitting with the homely little party round the dinner-table, eating onion-soup out of a pewter plate. He did not pursue his journey, but hastened to Neutingen, breathless with excitement, and frightening Marie, almost to fainting, by his reiterated, 'Die gnädige Fräulein—die gnädige Fräulein!' Marie would have gone to her that very night, but I would not hear of such a thing. I hardly feel more indignant and outraged against Carline than I do against this haughty, captious, heartless girl. You are always lenient to her, but you do not know, Hendy, how she has made Marie suffer. When I think of what our married life

might have been without these miserable family divisions, I almost wish that Marie had no heart and no tenderness but for me. It is so hard, Hendy, so very hard, that with all my love, and thoughtfulness, and solicitude I cannot make her happy. She loves me with a pure, intense love, as only such high natures are capable of loving; but whilst she is sad, it is as if I were a blind king, who, amid all the facilities of enjoyment, yet misses the one without which he cannot enjoy any. The next day, much against my inclination, Marie went to Marbach; as I expected, she returned alone, and in tears. For a long time she refused to tell me what had taken place, but at last, giving way to my

persuasions, she did so. On entering, she had thrown her arms around her daughter's neck, imploring her to forget the past, and come back to her old home and old love. Hermine did not receive her embraces unmoved, but obstinately declared it her intention to find a home for herself—adding that she should do nothing to disgrace her title of gentlewoman, and would in all cases refer for advice to *you*, whom she trusted and valued as a real friend. She would never, she said, subject herself to the sympathy or protection of a stepfather, whom she should always hate as the cause of Carl's removal from his home, and of much misery to them all! Marie's spirit rose then, but she made no answer and came away.

“I felt myself turn white as my wife repeated this speech. It was so cruel, so bitter of her to reproach Marie through reproaching me! Henderson, I could almost ask you to wash your hands of this girl, were she not her child.

“In just this vexed, impatient mood, I set off next morning to Marbach, for I was determined to end this wearing anxiety. Either Hermine should come to us meekly and lovingly as a daughter should, or she should lose us both for ever. I ask you, Hendy, can you blame me for such a determination? Had Hermine any claim upon me, before my wife? Who was to be considered first? Not as my wife alone, as the being nearest and dearest to me, but as the in-

jured woman, the true-hearted, long-suffering parent, Marie claimed the first consideration. I did not tell my resolve to Marie before starting, but she followed me to the door with anxious eyes, half-divining, I think, the purpose which led me to Marbach, for she said, 'You must not think too much of me, John, I have your love and protection to fall back upon always, but she has nothing. Do not spoil all, by loving me too well.'

"Hermine was in her own room when I arrived; and thither, as I expressed a wish to see her alone, the Frau Buss conducted me. It was a humble apartment, contrived 'a double debt to pay,' as all the rooms are here, by the help of a folding-screen, which

left but a very small space for a boudoir. The floors and walls were bare, and there was no furniture, but a little table, a rude sofa, and a few pots of flowers on the window sill. Accustomed to luxury as Hermine is, surely this hard poverty must gall her spirits. Richly-dressed, delicate, well-bred, what a contrast she presented to her surroundings! I really pitied her at the first moment. I did not afterwards; for when the first surprise at seeing me wore off, she was as cold and haughty as an empress.

“ ‘Why cannot you leave me in peace?’ she said, as her blush died away. ‘Am I a baby, that mama sends you to lecture me? I told her that I would do nothing without consulting Hender-

son—does she misbelieve me, or has she no trust in him?’

“I was determined to keep my temper for Marie’s sake, and looked at her steadily.

“‘I came on my own account, Hermine. I do not pretend to have any claim upon you—I neither ask nor expect your compliance or consideration—but as the husband of your mother, you will at least acknowledge that I am bound to do my duty to her children, however unpleasant it may be.’

“‘If your conscience directs you to any service for me, pleasant or unpleasant, I acquit you of it. I will never acknowledge your obligations,’ she replied.

“‘You can do as you please, but hear what I came to say. That you

can hardly refuse.' She made no answer, and I went on: 'I came here, Hermine, to make peace with you, if your heart is not too angry to be just; I came to hear from your own lips whether you intend to persevere in the injustice you have shown to me, or whether you value your mother's and your own happiness too much to throw them away so lightly.'

"She broke in impatiently:

" 'Do not tack my submission to mama's happiness. I was never necessary to it, and must be less so than ever now. Whatever you do, speak candidly. You know better than anyone how little I could be to her.'

"I continued, without heeding her interruption:

“‘I am aware that my position is a most delicate and unfortunate one. Whatever I do or say can only be accepted by you in its most selfish interpretation ; but without demanding or hoping from you the common consideration you might give a brother so much your senior, far less expecting you to respect me as an ordinary step-father, I wish you to hear from myself how gladly I would welcome you to the home which is now more than ever yours, how earnestly I would study your happiness and well-being, how sincerely I offer you my friendship——’

“‘It cannot be!’ she passionately cried ; ‘I must begin life anew. To go back to the old—to recall all those weary, weary days — all those unhappy

contests of feeling and opinion — would be too hard for me. Among new scenes, new faces, new friends, I could be happy, perhaps — here, never !’

“ ‘Think well,’ I said. ‘Is a home with love, and peace, and friendship to be cast away as not worth acceptance? Do you by your refusal preclude me from ever again offering you what I offer now?’ ”

“ ‘Then you have come to tell me that there is even a limit to mama’s forbearance — that she also is going to sentence me like a judge? What have I done to be so miserable?’ ”

“She bowed her head, and, I think, a tear or two fell. Though she had tried me as I had never been tried in my life before, I was touched. I

can understand, Hendy, why it is that your heart always relents towards this girl. She is so lovely, and so pathetic in her sorrow, that you forget how much her pride has hurt you just before.

“‘It is left to you to sentence yourself,’ I replied. ‘Will you come home to us or will you not? We impose no conditions on you—we only ask you to trust us. There is a boundary to human patience, and it is but right that you should know how far ours will go.’

“‘It need go no further,’ she said, rearing herself up; ‘I will not trouble your peace, or call upon you for forbearance. We should never be friends, since we should never confide in each

other; we had better part, before we say more that we shall wish unsaid.'

"Marie's words came back to me then, or I should have left her so. But for my wife's sake, I made another effort.

"'Hermine,' I said gently, 'you must not decide now. Perhaps we have both been too hasty to be just to each other, and if we part, let it be with kinder feelings. To-morrow I will come again.'

"'I *cannot* see you again!' she said, with hurried agitation; 'oh! do not come, it can do no good!'

"'You will see me if I come?'

"'I will give you my hand now—I will send a kind message to mama—anything rather than that.'

“‘Am I so hateful to you, Hermine? Are you determined, in the face of all reason and good feeling, to look upon me as an enemy? — for God’s sake, be more just to yourself!’

“She made no reply, but covered her bowed face with her hands. I moved nearer to her, and touched her shoulder softly.

“‘I could tell you how much happier our home would be if you shared it, and gave us your love and confidence — I could tell you how *one* is always sad for thinking how you have been divided from her hitherto — and more than this I could tell you, if you were in a frame to listen to it, Hermine. Child! child!

you are too young to throw yourself upon the world! Come to us, when our arms are opened wide to receive you.'

"Still she did not look up.

"'Say that you will come to us, dear Hermine!'

"'I cannot!' she exclaimed vehemently. 'Oh! let me go my own ways!'

"I grew cold again, for her obstinacy provoked me.

"'I shall not accept a resolution formed so impetuously,' I replied; 'when you are alone and calm, you will see things in a different light; at any rate, I will wait till to-morrow in such a hope.' And I left her.

"I confess to you, Hendy, that only the strictest sense of the duty

I owe to my wife's children would have led me to seek Hermine a second time; but Marie was so unhappy about her, so earnest in her wishes to obtain a good influence over her mind, that for her sake I resolved upon making another and still stronger effort.

“Hermine looked very pale and sad as I entered next day; partly, I think, because she had received no letter from you, and partly because she is miserably isolated and dreary in the Pfarrhaus. The Buss family are most kind to her; but the house, though scrupulously clean, appears as destitute of all comfort as a wigwam, to a person of refined tastes and habits; and then the cuisine, if at all like our own Pfarrer's, is composed of all that is sour, and sloppy, and

greasy. Do you remember how I starved in the Weimar Strasse for the first week of my stay there?

“She received me coldly and passively, though I fancied her lips trembled a little as she spoke.

“‘I will do as you like,’ she said; ‘I am compelled to do as you like. Henderson will not help me (how could I expect him to act against his brother?), and I have no other friend. You have conquered, but the triumph is a sorry one, since you fought with a helpless enemy. Girls are not allowed to have souls!—a pattern is put before them of words, thoughts, and actions, which, if they transgress, they are branded at once; and being a girl, I am not at liberty to think for

myself, but must accept such a life as the world deems fit and proper. This is the lesson I have learned since my childhood, and even Henderson has no better to give me. By choosing to live for myself, I put myself beyond the pale of good manners, and therefore of good morals; only by following out the line of conduct so liberally dictated to me can I hope to obtain common respect, and the love of those who, one would think, might afford to love me under any circumstances. I am sick of the old nursery admonition—‘If you are naughty, you are whipped; if you are good, you get a cake;’ but I suppose girls are always babies, since they never get higher treatment.’

“‘If you return to us merely from a cold sense of duty, I fear we shall stand little chance of being happy. Have you no heart, Hermine?’

“I put a hand on each of her shoulders, and looked into her eyes as I said this; she could not meet my gaze unflinchingly; her lips trembled, she tried to speak, then, throwing off my touch, she bowed herself in the chair, weeping bitterly.

“‘I am not heartless!—I wish to do what is right!—I would die contented if any one really loved me!—I wish to make mama happy, but I feel as if, whichever way I turn, the road were dark and slippery! Do with me as you will!’

“‘You must not think that we guide

you in this matter only with a selfish view to our own happiness; you must come to us in love, and trust, and tenderness, dear Hermine.'

"Again I would have taken her hand, but she shrank away as if I hurt her.

"'I have no right to expect kindness of you—do not speak so to me! Oh! go!—I will leave everything in your hands!—I will be dutiful to mama, but I cannot receive a sympathy and compassion from you which I have so little deserved!'

"Do you understand this girl, Hendy? I have never been so perplexed in my life as she has perplexed me. There seems to be a deep amount of tenderness in her heart, to which she dare not give

expression—which she endeavours to falsify by every word and action. When my voice is gentle, I can see a stream of red rise to her cheeks, and I never touch her hand but it trembles. She avoids me as if I were a serpent, yet I can see that I have an influence over her, more even than Marie has. I think she is conscious of this influence, and proudly rebels against it; for several times she has at first yielded to her better nature and submitted, afterwards turning against me, as if my power made me hateful.

“For instance, on the evening of her coming, when I welcomed her with kind words, and kissed her on the forehead, as if I would thereby seal our treaty of reconciliation, she received both the

welcome and the kiss with downcast, softened looks, and immediately afterwards broke from me, whispering passionately, 'Never that again—you have no right!'

"So, my Johnson, she is here, and I feel that I have at last done my difficult duty to Marie's daughter; it is a satisfaction to me that the duty was such; you know in my boyhood I always took comfort in some rude atonement for a previously committed offence. If I lost a book of yours when we were in petticoats at Miss Trim's, I was sure to give you my half-holiday cake instead; and on the same principle, because I had robbed Marie of one child, I would have moved heaven and earth, rather than that through me the other

should have turned from her home when she most needed it.

“You will ask, are we happier or not for this change? We are infinitely happier than we could have been in the event of Hermine forsaking us utterly ; for Marie is so sensitive, and so full of tenderness, that she would have reproached herself in secret, thus adding a new sadness to her inner life. In spite of her noble endeavours to conceal it from me, and to let me feel that my love is all-sufficient for her, I know how much she still suffers on Carl’s account. Whilst you are with him, she feels quite easy on the score of his well-being and progress, but is it not natural that her mother’s heart should pine for him in whom she found

her only consolation for years? We shall never be happy whilst he is away.

“But, at the same time, Hendy, with no other woman, even under the most untroubled circumstances, I could have enjoyed that amount of deep, unspeakable happiness that I do in Marie’s love. She is so different from most women; her mind is so refined and so purely intellectual, her nature is so beautiful and elevating, that every day I wonder more and more at her affection for me. And another thing, Hendy, that I have often wished to mention to you. Regarding myself in the light of an adventurer, I wished immediately after our marriage to earn my own living. I would not willingly incur the stigma of the family and of my own conscience, as

being a dependent on the bounty of my wife. She was too good and too proud to offer any objection to this—indeed she felt that she could not do so without impairing her own self-respect, and the strength and sweetness of our mutual love. Her own frail health, however, and the sorrow with which she has had to contend during the past winter, have prevented us hitherto from carrying out a plan so near to our hearts; but, now that she is stronger, she is as eager on the point as myself. You are aware that Herr Roser's brother is *Kammergerichtsrath* to King Wilhelm; through him, I am daily hoping to hear of employment—I care not what it is, nor whither it leads me, so long as my wife is satisfied.

“Several days have passed since I wrote last, and meantime your last letter has led us to expect you daily. Are you coming alone, Herr Professor? —or, for once in your life, with a dear little hand tucked under your arm, instead of some rusty volume? What a treat to see you courting, you dear old grammaticus! Do you present your Sophie with a weighty thesis, after the manner of Thomas Diaforus the learned? —or address her in Spenserian stanzas: ‘Fair eyes, the mirror of my mazèd heart, what wondrous virtue is contained in you!’ I hope you are not so absent a lover as Sir Isaac Newton, and use Sophie’s pink-tipped finger as your tobacco-stopper!

“Though I jest, Hendy, my heart is

very heavy. An undefined trouble, which I cannot explain to you, which perhaps exists in my imagination only, darkens the future! Oh! come to us. I never needed you as I need you now. Come soon!"

CHAPTER X.

CONTRARY to my expectations, Carline granted me a fortnight's holiday. Accordingly Sophie and I were married. The first week of our honeymoon was spent at Cannstatt, my little wife declaring it to be an impossibility for her to leave papa and mama all at once; and for the second we were invited to Schloss Weiler. Carline had taken Carl to Wildbad for the bathing season, consequently

in that pretty little town we were to commence housekeeping; the Colonel, after many journeys for the purpose, having hired and furnished three rooms for us, which he described as *recht nett*. Though we were so intensely hopeful and happy ourselves, our visit to Weiler must in some measure be a painful one, for I knew that Marie would never look at me without yearnings for Carl, and that I should miss her old playful sallies and genial humour.

John's last letter, too, had disturbed us not a little (was not Sophie to know my secrets henceforth and for ever?), and I could not help fearing that, in undertaking the charge of Hermine, he had over-rated his own powers of self-control and influence.

“She will urge them to go into society; she must have some interests and amusements,” I said to my wife; “and I well know how both John and my sister would shrink from that.”

“You must not take up troubles beforehand,” answered the little woman wisely; “after all, whatever they have to do cannot make them unhappy if they love each other. Oh! Henderson, I hope no one will call me Frau.”

We drove into the courtyard as the blush that her own remark had called up was dying away; they were all on the steps to meet us; and, what with embraces, congratulations, and kind speeches, poor little Sophie shed tears of mingled pleasure and shyness. Then followed the early dinner and the coffee in

the alcoved room, where we sat with all the casements open, looking on the terraced garden and the little fountain beneath which still lay poor Carl's white porcelain ducks. With what a mixture of feelings I recalled the first day of my stay at Weiler! How much had happened since then!

The first thing that struck me was the great coldness between John and Hermine. Had he done anything to offend her, or to hurt her feelings, that she should so shrink from his slightest attention or common words of courtesy. She was quiet and spoke little to anyone, but her absolute recoiling from him could not fail to be noticeable. When he touched her hand in helping her to coffee, I saw her colour rise; and once

when he sat down beside her, she answered his first question with an abrupt monosyllable, and then moved away. I think he had given up the hope of conciliating her, for his manner was reserved, almost formal—such a manner, in fact, as I could hardly have conceived it possible in one so essentially debonnair and ingenuous as my brother. Restraint had been at any time most painful to him, as it must be to a candid mind and warm heart; and I knew that, unless Hermine had wounded him very deeply, the scar would have disappeared at her next kind word. On the other hand, my brother was so irresistibly good-natured, that it was almost an impossibility to cherish an angry thought against him. But Hermine was prouder than she was

generous. Perhaps she still chafed inwardly at her own submission, and accused him of secretly triumphing over her. She was greatly changed; her voice had lost its gladness, and was like her mother's in its clear soft enunciation, though it could never have her mother's sweetness. She was less captious, less ambitious of taking the lead in conversation, less demonstrative of her likes and dislikes. You were not reminded of her approach by a quick rustling of silken skirts, and a snatch or two of some arch French song. You were not constantly made aware of her presence by a pretty, pert egotism, which fascinated you against your will. However much you rejoice in a change which is in itself salutary, I think it must always oppress

the heart to see a pretty woman melancholy, whom we once selected from all others as the gayest and most fond of pleasure; and I could not look at Hermine now without a feeling of pain. I never saw a face that expressed so much self-dissatisfaction. Often, if she were sitting apart from us, her brows contracted and her lips drew tightly together, as if some inward conflict were torture beyond endurance. She was especially kind and winning to Sophie, but there was something of the old hauteur in her manner to me, and I could see that she shunned my confidence.

“Henderson,” said my wife artlessly, when supper was over, “do take me into your queer little study with the low windows and winding staircase,

down which Carl and I used to chase each other so often last summer."

No sooner had she spoken than the consciousness of having committed an error made the tears spring to her eyes. Not daring to look at Marie she plucked at her sash nervously.

Marie rose at once and came over to us.

"Let me go with you, Henderson," she said, in a low, calm voice; "I have not been into that part of the Schloss since *he* left."

There was something in her face that made me motion Sophie to stay away. John was talking to the Amtmann in the orchard; as we passed through the corridor I heard the two girls descend, no doubt intent upon a twilight stroll round the Schloss.

When we reached the door leading into Carl's bedroom, Marie took a key from her pocket with trembling hands.

"No one has entered since that day," she whispered with a pale, unexpressed agony; "no one has touched the key but myself. I have often longed to go in, but I dared not."

With hushed steps, as if she were in a chamber of death, Marie walked slowly to every familiar object, stopping now and then, as a book or toy recalled him most strongly to her. Nothing had been removed or set in order. There lay the little embroidered slippers that he had thrown off so carelessly—there stood the childish ink-bedaubed desk crammed full of dried plants, scraps of exercises, and cut-out prints—on one

chair was hung a slate, on which he had worked out a sum, and amused himself meantime with an imaginary sketch of a German warrior, after the delineation of Tacitus—on another were strewn the socks and shirt he had taken off on that last night. What a story of wilful impetuous boyhood was told in all these! But it moved me more than all to see the little bed, which was left just as he had risen from it; and when Marie came to this, and saw the pillow indented with the impress of his head, and the coverlid thrown back with the pirated story-book lying upon it, which had been smuggled for reading at night, everything seemed to bring back the real Carl so forcibly before her,

that she sank on her knees in a passion of grief. She kissed again and again the place where his head had rested, and the little slippers, and the pirated book, with a heart-rending cry—

“My darling, my pretty Carl! will you never be mine again?”

Then she wept and wailed, rocking herself to and fro, as one whose heart was breaking.

“It is as if he were dead,” she said to me when the first violence of her emotion was over; “I could hardly be more removed from him. Were it not for you, Henderson, I would rather see him lying dead, there in his little bed, than have him in her power. Oh! my friend, my brother, it is no small part of my grief that it makes me ungrateful

for the love I receive. I cannot be happy. John is so good, so gentle, so patient, I cannot tell you what my husband has been, and always will be to me; but whilst Carl is separated from me, I must miss him, and grieve for him no less than I do now. If I could help reproaching myself, I might in time grow more resigned. O God! that I should be made so miserable by the love that promised to make me happy!"

"You will not let him love Carline?" she continued with a bright fire in her eyes; "you must never do that, Henderson, she has made me suffer too much. If I were to die to-morrow—even if Carl had not you for his friend, and *him*—you two, who I know will never forsake him—I could not pray for that. He must never

love her. If she guided him in the right way, if I felt sure that she would influence him in all other things to what is noble and good and manly, I should still feel the same about it. I could not bear to have my pure and sinless love for my boy pushed out of his heart, to make room for hers. Are there some women, Henderson, who have no instincts, no humanity, who are born without the milk of woman's love? I think there must be ; and, by heavens ! she has so far poisoned me with the venom of her bad nature, that, if it were in my power to save her from a cruel death, I could not lift a finger to do it. I think I could rejoice in her torment— Oh, pardon, pardon, my brother, but you cannot know what a mother's love is !—

you cannot know the weary yearning day after day to hear his quick step and joyful voice—the heartsick longing to feel his soft hair, and kiss his innocent boy's lips. Therefore, Henderson, though your heart is so true and so tender, it will be difficult for you to pardon what can be pardoned by the great heart of God only, which does not judge us by rule or by laws laid down, but by the perfect Love which is perfect Wisdom. Can I ever tell you how I have suffered? Can you know how hard it is for a woman to feel that the possession of the very love she has hungered for, throughout her sorrowful life, is a self-reproach and a bitterness to be tasted in daily wine and bread? If I did not know how honestly, how devotedly my hus-

band loved me, I could bear it better; but to feel that I am all in all to him, that the wealth of his manly, noble nature is given so lavishly to me, and that I have nothing to bestow in return—this is the hardest of all——”

“Is it so, my wife?—am I utterly miserable?” asked John, whose approach we had been too engrossed to perceive. He stood before us with a face of hard, unflinching resolve. I had seen him look so once before, when, a party of heedless young men, his college associates, having insulted our father’s memory, he compelled them to retract their words one by one.

Marie saw that look, and met it with a passionate appeal of words and tears.

“John, have pity! Nothing you can

say will reproach me as my own heart does. I love you—you know how I have striven to render you happy—to let my love for you overcome everything—but should I be so worthy of your affection if I had no woman's tenderness in me?"

"Have pity on *me*, Marie," he said bitterly; "have I nothing to reproach myself for? Had I hated you as intensely as I loved you, I could hardly have made you more wretched."

"No, no!" she continued earnestly, "we must neither of us reproach ourselves. We did what we thought was for our mutual happiness; how could we tell that such an infamy would spoil it all? Dearest, believe that my heart is as true and as tender to you as it was on the

day you first called me yours—you must believe it, if you are just to me.”

“If I could forgive myself, I could be more just to *you*,” replied John with sadness. “Oh, my wife, my love, can I forget how changed you are since that time—and I have done it all!”

He touched her poor pale cheek with a melancholy tenderness, and then moved away quickly, as if he had lost the right to comfort her. For some minutes Marie sat silent and motionless, her eyes looking to mine for a consolation she could not ask in words. By-and-bye she took courage and said,

“I was wrong in concealing this from you—I ought to have known that my grief would be yours.”

“No, you were right,” John replied

quickly; “at least for a little time I have been happy in the thought that my love was your strength. I have been blind, but I would willingly have remained so. Now I know the worst. Nothing can hurt me after this, Marie.”

She pressed her hands over her face, but could not weep. There was a long stillness in the room. Was she too proud to melt his hard mood, or was she too unhappy and mistrustful of herself? Instinctively, I felt as if from this time Carl's shadow would stand darkly between them if they parted in this way. I took Marie's thin hand, and led her to John.

“Forgive me!—I did it to spare you!—you *must* comfort me!” was all

the quivering lips could utter, but what need of more? She fell upon his neck, encircled by his strong arms; and hoping, praying, that their love might prove equal to their sorrow, I left them.

CHAPTER XI.

THE next morning John received a letter from Herr Roser to the following effect :—

“Stuttgart, April 3rd, 185—.

“MY DEAR SIR,—We have not forgotten your wishes, expressed to us some time ago, with regard to an appointment, and have been anxiously waiting for an opportunity to serve you and our re-

spected and dear friend, the Baroness. Allow us now to offer you the best that has come, or is likely to come in our way.

“In consequence of some difficulties having occurred in our branch establishment in Berlin, through the defalcations of our head clerk, and involving great pecuniary risks to us, we require a gentleman to proceed thither immediately, as deputy-director.

“Such an office only requires tact and clearness of head in the management of commercial and banking transactions, and you will confer a personal favour upon us, by the acceptance of it; at the same time, we are happy to offer you any reasonable remuneration that you may fix upon—the services and supervision of a

personal friend being especially needful to us at this present moment.

“Should you decide *not* to accept this appointment, may we rely upon an answer by return of post, as the presence of our deputy-director is required in Berlin immediately, and the delay of a day may be of great fatality to us.

“We greet the Baroness respectfully, and remain, dear sir,

“Yours faithfully and truly,

“HEINRICH ROSER & Co.”

The contents of this letter were made known at breakfast-time, Hermine and my wife both being present.

John negatived it at once.

“It is a kind and a generous offer,”

he said with a little regret; "but it would take you so far away from Carl, Marie—otherwise, there is no objection."

Hermine's eyes flashed her quick surprise on his face as she looked up. She seemed anxious to speak, but waited to hear Marie's answer. It came slowly and calmly:

"I will go, John."

"And I will not go, dearest," he replied with an attempt at gaiety; "I could not think of exiling you."

"Mama, surely you will not prevent it!" exclaimed Hermine, her pale face suddenly lit with colour; "do not look to the present—think of the future—what could be more advantageous to—to——" she stammered out at last, "to my stepfather, than such a position, in such a place?"

“You are right,” said John quietly. “It is well to be reminded sometimes that my position here is less independent than that of the boor who tends the cows. I thank you, Hermine.”

His words scarred her cheeks as if they were heated iron.

“How can you be so unjust—so cruel!” she cried with passionate tears starting to her eyes; “when I am here by your suffrage only, should I be so unwise as to express such thoughts, even if I were mean enough to think them? I am only ambitious for you. For your own sake, for mama’s, for the sake of us all, I should rejoice to see you in a position in which you could do justice to yourself. Am I wrong in interesting myself for

your well-being? Do you put a veto on my earnest wishes for you?"

Marie touched her shoulder lightly, but the proud girl shook off the hand, and moved her chair farther from her mother's side.

John's brow darkened.

"Whatever ill feeling or anger is in your heart towards *me*, I cannot restrain, even if I cared to do so; but I forbid you to testify impertinence or disrespect to my wife, Hermine—I would say, to your mother, only that you seem anxious to disannul the tie of such a relationship."

"I did not mean to be either impertinent or disrespectful," answered Hermine in a gentler tone; "I cannot help showing my feelings, and my feelings always

tend to the direct opposite of mama's. Why are these discussions brought forward in my presence, if I am not to give an opinion? I have no wish to create unpleasantness—I am only anxious to see you happier; and you will never be so whilst your life is inactive. Inactivity is the ruin of a woman's individuality—it is the curse of a man's."

Marie looked at John with searching eyes.

"Hermine is right," she said, "and I will not be the one to stand in your way when the very thing most necessary for your well-being is offered. Write to Herr Roser, John, and say that we will start the day after to-morrow for Berlin."

"We will talk about it whilst I smoke

my cigar in the garden," replied John cheerfully; and replacing the letter in his pocket, he rose from the breakfast-table without looking at Hermine.

Not so, however, was she disposed to let him go.

"You must speak to me before you decide," she said hesitatingly, and looked up into his face with silent entreaty. Who could have withstood Hermine's beauty then?

John had reached the door, but now stood still.

Marie was already gone, or I think Hermine's pride would have held out longer.

"Oh! will you forgive me?" she asked, blushing and trembling; "I did not mean to speak so — indeed I had no intention of wounding you."

John was melted in a moment.

“You have a better ambition for me than I have for myself, Hermine. Believe me, I feel that what you said was right and wise intentionally. Can I atone for my hasty speech more fully than by acknowledging this?”

He held her outstretched hand for a moment, and added sadly,

“But of two duties, one must choose not that owed to one’s self, but that owed to another. Therefore, Hermine, I shall stay here. If I sacrifice my independence by so doing, at least you will grant that it is in a good cause.”

“Mama will not exact the sacrifice of you. What true woman would not cut off her right hand rather than stand in the way of her husband’s

honest ambition to procure for himself a place among other men? It is our part to sacrifice—yours to work and uphold our honour.”

His face caught the glow of her enthusiasm.

“Ah! if I could do that!—but,” and his voice fell to a lower key, “I can do nothing, either for you or for *her*. Hermine, I feel my false position more bitterly every day. I am her husband—I am your protector—yet I am nothing. How gladly would I restore to you all that you have lost—society, friends, position; they are necessary to you now—they are your right.”

“I do not want them—they never made me happy.”

“But they would make you happier. You are so young, Hermine, that it is nothing less than a wrong to keep you in an isolated country place, with no more cheerful companions than Marie and myself can be to you now. You must miss what you have lost.”

“Never! *She* loved me truly, but her life, if not a falsehood, was at least an injustice; I could not go back to her—I could not love her again.”

“You are not happy, Hermine.”

She started, as a frightened hare will start when it hears an unexpected tally-ho!

“I have never said that—I have never implied it. It were impossible that I could be joyous just now; but I do not regret the past. My life here is

monotonous, inane; had I married Count Cress, it would have been frivolous, and perhaps less harmless than it is here. It is to be questioned whether I have lost or gained; but I did what was morally right, and there ought to be some consolation in that. I have not found it yet—it may come by - and-bye—meantime, I stand as it were on a desert, and have no hope of a day that will bring me a new thought or a new interest.”

Leaving his side abruptly, she came over to me.

“Talk to Sophie—she is a quintessence of all that is happy, and bright, and good. Henderson, are you in a humour to bear with me? May I read English to you, or do something by way of occupation?”

John joined Marie in the garden. Sophie went to seek her work. I looked up and saw that Hermine's eyes were filled with tears.

“Are you unhappy, Hermine? Is your life so dreary?”

“Henderson, I am angry with myself for having been dragged into a half-confession; after all, my life is not more dreary than that of hundreds of women. We must have an employment to call our own, if we have not an affection. A dinner to cook would be something, but I have been educated in Paris, and was taught that a lady must keep her hands white. I have no appetite, no hearty enjoyment, because I am compelled to be indolent. Oh! who can wonder that so many

girls are wrapped up in petty vanities or selfish worldliness? Who can wonder that so many are coquettes and fools? What are women born with minds for, if they are perverted to such uses ? ”

“ You are too harsh upon your sex, dear Hermine. Where there is work to be found, noble work too, there is never wanting a large-hearted, single-minded woman to do it; and to their sweet and good home influences we owe our best workers and most earnest thinkers.”

“ I ought to thank you that you esteem us so generously; but I cannot forget, Henderson, that once, when I would have taken upon myself the responsibility of my own life, with a

zealous purpose for good, you argued as I argue now: 'Women are weak vessels, and cannot stand alone; therefore, Hermine, you must draw back and anchor on a desert, praying daily and hourly for a destiny no wider and no higher than those of your sisters.' Oh! Henderson, it is so much more difficult to walk in a straight line, when you are alone, with nothing to break the solitude and the silence of the wastes stretching round you! I pray to God on my knees that I may not fall, but it is so difficult—so very difficult!"

Her face had a strange fear and agitation in it as she said this, and she walked on quickly, as if fleeing from an unseen presence.

"Do not say that you are alone.

Cannot I help you—cannot you reach my hand in this new trouble? You have done it before, Hermine.”

“No, you cannot help me. No one can help me but God. If I could, if I dared, I would catch your hand in the darkness, but something separates us. Henderson, if you touched my hand held out to you so, you would shake it from you, as if it were a stinging serpent. It is so dark—my heart fails me, lest my feet should stumble—yet I must go on alone! O God, help me!”

She buried her face in her hands, and a short helpless sob followed.

“Lean on me, trust in me, my child,” I said, much moved; “think that through everything I will help you and stand by you.”

“I am so miserably weak and cowardly—I shall be stronger soon; let me cry, Henderson, it does me good,” and she wept passionately.

When she looked up, her eyes shone clear and steady.

“I *will* conquer; if I die for it, I will conquer, Henderson. Perhaps women have no souls, but at least they can endure in silence.”

CHAPTER XII.

THE subject of the directorship was dropped throughout the day, but in the evening John brought me the letter for inspection, in which he declined Herr Roser's offer with many thanks. Sorrow made John both proud and humble. It made him humble in so far as concerned other people, for he received any kind of trouble as an

indefinite punishment for some indefinite sin or shortcoming of his own, which required of him, as a kind of atonement, a more uniform tenderness and lenience towards all around him. It made him also prouder, but only with regard to himself. He never spoke of his inward griefs—he took his trouble to himself, and battled with it alone; he was too strong to confess his weakness to any but One. Had I not shared the same pillow with him in childhood—had I not wiped away his tears, and protected him with all the pride of an elder brother from boyish enemies and fears, had I not nursed him during the illnesses of his motherless youth?—had we not fancied ourselves in love in our teens, and confided to each other our

florid love-letters? We had always been together, we had always been true to each other; but the grief that touched his heart—chilled mine; it laid a cold, death-like hand upon us—it never brought us nearer together in the form of an angel. This had often been a great trial to me; for, so long as I had a soul in the world to love me, I could no more keep from confiding my heaviness to him, than I could contain a joy in which I knew he would share.

“I am glad you have refused it, John.”

“I never dreamed, for an instant, of accepting it. Had it not been for Hermine, the letter would have been sent off in time to catch the second post at Ludwigsburg.”

“She is so anxious for you to accept this office.”

His face flushed, but for a second only.

“In a measure I can understand how she feels about it, Hendy. It is impossible for a poor man to marry a rich woman—I should rather say a woman of position, especially if she is older than himself—without the world judging them: the one as mercenary, the other as frivolous. Marie is young, and still beautiful; but though very far from possessing even moderate riches, she has ample means to support her position as a lady in this country. I am without a profession, and am younger than she. Why should a more favourable verdict be given to us than to other offenders against

the laws of daily occurrence and common routine? I have often heard you say, Hendy, how impossible it is to wear your hat in a different way from other people without some immoral meaning being tacked to it. Hermine is thoroughly high-principled and far-seeing. She sets no value on the opinion of the world—only inasmuch as, by forfeiting the esteem of the society amongst which you are thrown, she knows that you forfeit, in a measure, a virtual good; for however small-minded such prejudice is, you respect yourself better for living above than below it. I may not really be more independent and self-respecting as a bank-director; but, holding that position, I should feel that no one could throw me from it; on the contrary, the

very security in my own integrity, whilst I remain unoccupied, is apt to blunt my sensitiveness, and to lead me into the very degradation to which others consign me now. With respect to Carl—how far more likely are we to be friends in the future, if he has had every reason to esteem my conduct in the past? And, Hermine, I cannot claim her friendship and her confidence till I feel that I have earned a right to them. She is capricious and cold, perhaps, but I believe her to be a noble-minded and conscientious girl. I cannot tell you how earnestly she entreated me to accept this office.”

“Hermine entreated you?”

“Yes, she talked a great deal to my wife about it in her own room, before

dinner, persuading Marie to urge my acceptance. With regard to the benefits accruing to herself, Marie was firm as a rock. ‘Do you think,’ she said (you know how she looks when she says a brave and noble thing, Hendy), ‘do you think I care one straw, Hermine, if all Stuttgart hooted me in the public streets, as having been married for my money? Can they hurt me in my husband’s eyes?—can they hurt my husband in mine? If they can, we deserve the opprobrium of those who give it, and the contempt of those who are higher-minded.’ It was in vain that Hermine asked her to remain behind, and let me go alone. ‘I will go with him, but not on the plea of doing homage to opinion,’ Marie said again and again to me, but——”

He lighted a taper, and sealed the letter hastily.

“It would kill her, Hendy. Who is Hermine, who am I, that we should make her suffer so?”

I wrung his hand warmly.

“You can never love her too well, John.”

“Ah! dear old boy, how fond she is of my Johnson too! What a warm, chivalrous heart you have, Hendy! Sophie must be very happy.”

“I wish you were as happy.”

“If I felt sure that Hermine looked on me as a friend, I should have one trouble the less. In each other—but you know, Hendy, what a life must be, blessed with Marie’s love—I cannot speak of *that* even to you. With Hermine I

still feel almost the same restraint and uncertainty that I felt when she first came. True, she spoke openly, humbly even, to me this morning. It is the only time that I have not seemed hateful to her. Has she no lovingness in her nature? Can I never win her confidence?"

He was here called away by Heinrich, and I continued my letter-writing till the dusk came on.

CHAPTER XIII.

WE were not domiciled in the rooms formerly inhabited by Carl and myself, but in three spacious apartments leading into each other, and never used but by visitors. Opposite to us, and on either side, were similar suites of rooms, unoccupied at the present time. Picture to yourself a corridor with irregular white-washed walls and bare floors, ram-

bling little passages and stair-cases here and there, very grand-looking Barons staring you out of countenance from the walls, a spinet of dumb antiquity in one corner, a carved oak cabinet of rare value in another—and you will have some idea of our location. Inside, the rooms were splendid and airy, with white cotton curtains, crimson velvet sofas, antique clocks, and tapestried chairs, all set off by a floor as shining as satin-wood. We had long twilights, our embrasures being small, and three feet deep; looking out of these little windows, the garden below reminded you of a child's toy - garden in painted wood.

It was Heinrich's office to collect the letters, and to see that they were

dispatched by the eilwagen that passed our gates at eight o'clock. Leaving mine on the table therefore, I entered the inner apartment on tip-toe; for I had left Sophie there nearly an hour since, and, having heard no sound, supposed her to be asleep. We had spent nearly the whole day out of doors, and I was not surprised to find her curled up in a large arm-chair, her little feet tucked under her, and her head bent over her closed hands, looking the very picture of innocent enjoyment. Not wishing to break it, I sat down beside her very softly. I do not know how long the perfect silence lasted, but I was aroused by the sound of a footstep in the adjoining room. The light had so far gone that I could only just distin-

guish in outline the table and chair I had just quitted; and though a figure stood between them and the window, I could not tell whether it was that of a man or a woman. I could only see that it stooped over something, and then passed slowly backwards and forwards before the embrasure.

I was about to speak, when an agonised whisper in the next room surprised me into silence.

“What *shall* I do?” the voice said; and there was such an amount of weariness and hopelessness in those simple words, that I held my breath. Was it Marie or Hermine speaking? I knew that they were both in trouble and perplexity; but Marie was so self-composed, and so reliant on John, that I could

hardly imagine her giving expression to the isolation, the self-mistrust, the doubting sorrow, implied in that short sentence. It had been evident to me, since my arrival, that Hermine was struggling with something that she could not, or dared not, confide. But why had she sought my room when she might have been quite certain that I should have gone down to supper? Why, if she wanted help, had she not come straight to me? I was about to call her name when Sophie woke up.

“Oh! Hendy, how you frightened me!” she cried; and at the sound of her voice Hermine disappeared.

Hermine was so reticent and sad during the next few days, that I could not ask her confidence; I could only

let her see, by constant solicitude and careful watching, that I was determined to enter into her inner life in spite of herself. At first she was wilful and angry, tried to quarrel with me, and so to provoke me into indifference, but she had shown her liking and trust too much to retract them now. I knew my influence, and I was determined to hold it as long as it could serve her.

One morning, when I was helping Sophie to sort out coloured worsteds for a grand cornice-piece, intended as a present to Marie, and Hermine sat in the window-seat holding a book before her, John entered in great perplexity.

“My dear Hendy, how is this? I wrote to Herr Roser on Tuesday, and on Saturday he writes in the utmost

surprise at my long silence, which, in spite of his politeness and good temper, has evidently put him to serious inconvenience. The affairs at Berlin grow worse and worse, and he has gone off this morning himself, hoping I shall resolve to follow him."

"I sent your letter, John—that is to say, as far as I ever send any letters. They were left for Heinrich."

He pulled at the bell furiously.

"It is unpardonable for a man of Heinrich's years to be so careless. Really, if he were not so old and tried a servant, I should dismiss him. By this delay Herr Roser has been compelled to take a journey for which he is quite incapable, and is necessarily neglecting his business in Stuttgart as well."

Hermine had risen when he entered, and she now approached him.

“I intercepted that letter,” she said quite calmly.

“You, Hermine!” exclaimed John, when the first suddenness of his surprise was over; “and why have you done this? Do you hate me still?—am I so much your enemy that you must thus meanly revenge yourself?”

He was too angry to forgive her, and stood aloof, with a stern, hard face, which she met fearlessly.

“Have I injured you willingly, Hermine—answer me?”

“You have not injured me willingly, but you cannot help being my enemy. You have spoilt the peace of my home, and peace is all I want. Leave us, and

I will learn to be your friend. I would rather be your friend, but I cannot whilst you are here. Not a day—not an hour passes without reminding me of all that I have lost through you.”

“Have I seemed so happy that you could deem me forgetful of all this? Do you think every hour has not its bitter portion for *me* also? Can your generosity limit itself to self-compassion only, Hermine?”

His pitiless words seemed to crush her. She covered her face with her hands, and was silent.

“I had hoped,” he continued, “that you were trying to overcome these feelings of dislike to me. I have done my utmost to atone, as far as I am able to do now, for the wrong you have re-

ceived at my hands. If God spares me till I am less shackled, I hope to prove to you that I have your happiness near to my heart. Till then can you not trust me? Hermine, you are young, and will be very lonely if you persist in hating me so, for we cannot be always thus patient; do you not shrink from such loneliness?"

"I can never be more lonely than I am now—I fear nothing."

"But loneliness will be heavier to bear if you feel that we do not love you—how can we love you whilst you mar our peace thus? Do you not see that every opposing act of yours, every bitter word or look, adds to your mother's unhappiness?"

"John," I said gently, "this is too

much. Remember that she suffers too."

He turned round sharply.

"It is not too much, Hendy, when you consider that her own sufferings are self-inflicted; whereas Marie is, and always has been, a victim. You want me to go, Hermine—you will not try to be happy, or to make us so—you are bent upon dividing my wife and myself. Confess this was your aim in destroying that letter."

"I would rather die than come between you and mama. Oh! Henderson, am I so wicked?"

"At least you will admit that, by delaying this letter, you hoped I should have been compelled to accept the directorship offered to me by Herr Roser?"

"I did; but I call God to witness

that it was with no intention of separating you from her. I would have remained near Carl, would have gone to Aunt Carline even, rather than let her stay behind. She can do Carl no good by remaining—she can seldom see him—he is well cared for—why does she stay here?”

“Your actions may be well-intentioned,” continued John; “but they are miserable in their results. I cannot see how, except in the fact of being your step-father, my presence can be so hateful to you. What is there in my daily conduct that jars upon you? From this time I exact nothing—I ask nothing—I hope for nothing, Hermine; I hoped once that you might be my friend, you could have made us happier;

but after much patient waiting, I find that it is to no purpose. You are determined to walk in a separate path—we must leave you in it. I cannot offer you my friendship from henceforth, Hermine, since I have been obliged to withdraw my esteem. You cannot hurt me when I am indifferent, therefore I will forgive you the wrong you have done me. We shall dwell under the same roof, and shall eat the same bread—perhaps for many years; but I can never, never feel to you again as I felt yesterday—I am sorry for it. I would have cut off my right hand to be as much to you as Henderson is; nevertheless, I feel that this regret will grow daily less and less, till a time will come when I can take your hand

as that of the merest stranger, and not be grieved that it is so."

Sophie had slipped out of the room, frightened into tears by John's anger and Hermine's white, desperate face; but I remained, for I felt that Hermine had never needed me more. When John's merciless words ceased, she looked at me with a face of mute imploring. Even at the risk of a quarrel with my brother, I was resolved to throw a lance for her now.

"John, you are unjust; to-morrow you will feel that you have been so—let me entreat you to make no decisions till then."

"Don't be a fool, Hendy! Have you no more regard for Marie than she has?"

As a half-dead animal will be recalled to consciousness by the last cruel stroke of the slayer, Hermine's spirit rose beneath these words. John had turned to go, but she placed herself in the door-way before him, and said, with tremulous earnestness:—

“I cannot bear that to be said of me!—I could have let you go before, with all your contempt, all your indifference, all your mistrust!—but I am not heartless, and I will have justice from you! I am not so bad but that I have some good and pure thoughts, and some noble aspirations!—I value myself too much to be cast out of your way like a crushed worm! And granted that I am wicked, and mean, and selfish, would it not be more generous of

you to pick up such a worm, and place it out of harm's way? Did you say that you can never feel towards me as you did yesterday?—God help me, then, for I am very miserable!”

She burst into tears, and continued with a despairing energy:

“You have utterly misjudged me!—I cannot tell you now what demon has so tempted me from the right—I can only ask your pardon!—do not leave me in anger and contempt, it will break my heart!”

Though she knelt before him in a passion of entreaty, though her fair hair touched his hand, and her sorrowful, lovely face was bowed in humble supplication, John's features never moved from their rigid purpose. Then,

for the first time, I realized the depth and entireness of his love for Marie. Had he loved her one whit less steadfastly, his heart would have softened now to her erring child.

“Hermine, you have done *her* too much harm,” he said in an unmoved voice; “could I forget that, forgiveness would be easy. If I had not tried daily and hourly to render you happy, my conscience would not allow me to judge you; but I can now freely acquit myself of all interest, all love, all duty to you, beyond the mere literal protection I am bound to give my wife’s child. I give no more—I can never give you more—and it is for her sake alone that I promise this.”

Without another look he left her.

There was something in her white face and lustrous eyes that struck me with horror.

“Look up, dearest Hermine — speak to me. I am your friend always — we love you, Sophie and I,” were all the words I could say; but simple as they were, they thawed her ice-bound heart.

Stretching her arms towards me she would have fallen, had I not jumped forward and caught her.

“Let me die!” she cried despairingly. “He hates me, he despises me, and I have done it all! — there was no other way, and I thought I could bear it! But oh! Henderson, it will break my heart!”

CHAPTER XIV.

PITYING Hermine as I did, still I could hardly blame John. He might certainly have been gentler, but by putting myself in his place I could easily comprehend the torrent of bitterness that her last act had aroused. Yet Hermine's sufferings must have equalled his—then she leaned upon me in her sorrow, she cared for me—this alone

would have made me quick to pity, and slow to judge.

Leaving her to my wife's womanly ministrations of kisses and tears (it is wonderful how one woman's soft heart can unlock that of another), I strolled among the orchard trees, setting my mind earnestly to work upon some plan that should work towards the good of all. It seemed to me that Hermine's absence from home, at least for a year, was the first thing necessary to peace; and I determined to put my resolve to her in the mildest form—namely, in that of an invitation to accompany myself and Sophie to Wildbad for the summer months. There were many objections to this, Caroline's presence being foremost and greatest, but none weighed so heavily in the balance

as my sister's happiness. In Hermine's present state I knew that anything in the way of a new life would be welcome, and anything that she could do most painful to herself would be welcomest of all, for her mind had a tinge of Romanism in it, ever seeking to make self-sacrifice for past sin.

I was not surprised, therefore, at the reception which my proposal met with. They were sitting together when I returned, Sophie chirping cheerful little nothings, like a linnet—Hermine listening with a sort of compassionate wistfulness, as if she envied such happy child-like spirits.

“Have you been thinking for me?” she asked, in a hopeless, indifferent voice.

“Yes, Hermine; and I have come to tell you what you must do.”

I said this with decision, and sat down before her, as if I had the right to command—this was the only way of getting Hermine to obey.

“And I also have been thinking for myself—may I hear your conclusion first?”

“You must leave Weiler!”

“And what else?”

“Before leaving, you must make peace with your mother’s husband!”

Her eyes flashed in the old way, but she merely said:

“Where am I to go?”

“Our home—Sophie’s and mine—must be best for you, till a better can be found. We will try to make you happy.”

“That we will!” exclaimed busy Frau Sophiechen; “oh! Hermine, do come to us!”

“No, Henderson,” replied Hermine, coldly and calmly. “I will obey your wish, but not to the letter. To me it seems that only one person, only one home, has a claim upon me. You would be very kind, but I should in no wise be enabled to repay it. If I come to you, I fulfil no duty, I atone for no wrong that I have done. I must go to Aunt Carline.”

“By Heavens! no—a hundred times no!”

“Don’t be angry with me, Henderson, for nothing will shake my purpose. If you reflect upon it, you can but see the reasonableness of the step. Who loves

me so well?—whom else have I wounded so deeply?”

“Some one besides loves you better, because her love is purer. Whilst Carline is an enemy to the pure love a child owes her mother, it is more than wrong of you to seek her; it is wicked, Hermine. Better stay here.”

I spoke with quiet but real anger, which she did not or would not resent.

“You cannot understand my feelings, Henderson, or you would not speak in that way. By the very act of seeking Aunt Carline I shall be saved from wickedness.”

A bright flush burned her cheeks as she spoke the last words. Her lips trembled, as if too cowardly to speak her

thoughts, and for a few seconds she played with her chain nervously.

“You speak riddles, Hermine; but if you spoke ever so clearly, you would never convince me that you were doing right by such a step. I am an old friend—hear me.”

“Not on that subject—on any other, dear Henderson, say what you like, I will listen to anything from you.”

“When you speak thus, you simply make a fool of me, Hermine; you might treat *me* better, I think. Tell me your reasons openly for going to Carline.”

She looked at me with sad, serious eyes, and shook her head.

“Oh! Henderson, will you not trust me? I know I have done little to deserve

your confidence, but I shall be worthier of it perhaps by-and-bye. Only believe me—I entreat you to believe me—when I say that I go to Aunt Carline with no feelings of enmity towards my mother, with no wish to show any bitterness towards her, or towards her husband—will you believe this, dear Henderson?”

“But you must show bitterness towards both by such a step. You ask me, Hermine, to believe against my reason.”

“Oh! Henderson, I can never have a home here—let me go my own ways, and do what I can towards framing a better life—I can never make a step forward whilst I remain—you do not know my temptations.”

Her eyes restlessly glanced towards the

window from whence the figures of John and Marie could be seen in the orchard. I saw that she started a little as she caught sight of them, and both the words and the action puzzled me.

“Take me to them now!” she exclaimed suddenly; “let peace be made between us, and then, Henderson, I must go, whether permitted or not.”

She looked lovely in her white morning dress as she met them, her pretty, proud head thrown back, her fair face eager and expressive of sorrowful penitence, her soft chestnut hair burnished by the warm sunlight.

“May I speak to you, mama?” she asked, with the least touch of her old haughtiness.

John caught up her words and the manner of them instantly.

“Let us come to an understanding at once, Hermine, and have no more of these unpleasant scenes. Are you going to let us be happy, or are you not—do you stay with us, or do you go?”

His severity did not rouse her to resentment. On the contrary, it subdued her.

“I know that I deserve all your contempt and all your dislike, but it is very hard to bear—harder because you can never know why I have acted as I have done. But now that we are parting, forgive me, for I will never disturb your peace again, and I will atone, as far as I can, for the past. Mother, do you hear me?—I am going back to Carl—I shall not come across your path any more; I shall in some

measure make up for this unhappiness—will you forgive me?”

Her tears rose as she held a hand to each. Marie would have embraced her, but she held back.

“No, mother, you must not take me in your arms yet. We do not love each other as we ought, mama—till then, let us not be hypocrites. You can think of me without this show of affection, and I shall grow more like a daughter to you by-and-bye.”

“Carl?—what did you say of Carl?” asked Marie, with anxious looks.

“I am going to him, mama—to Aunt Carline.”

A stream of anger shot from John's eyes.

“No, Hermine, you will not go to

Carline's!—if I keep you here by the unjustest means in the world, I will do it! Rather would I see you on your death-bed than with her again!"

I expected Hermine to have resisted fierily at this, but a quiet light, almost of pleasure, stole into her eyes as she looked up.

"Am I to stay here, then, against my will? Do you compel me to obey you?"

"Oh! child, child!" cried my brother, passionately, "why do you force me to be your enemy thus? Why do you not let me love you, and care for you, and cherish you?—why do you not yield yourself to the better influences of your heart, and stay here and love us both? I appeal, not to your reason

as a fellow-creature, Hermine, but to your faith as a woman, and I ask you, I entreat you even, to accept our love. We give it you readily and fully, Marie and I; we hold out our arms to you for the last time. Think, child, of all the bitter years that may come upon you if you turn your back upon us now—think of all that you have suffered once, and of all that you will suffer again, if you are cast out from Carline's false heart. Will you leave us for her? "

"No, no, no!" answered Hermine; but she made no step towards him.

"You are so young," continued John, in the same earnest voice—"so young, and so capable of noble and good feelings, that I would give up some years

of my life rather than see your heart harden against its true home and affections. The sun is shining on you, Hermine—can you look me in the face, with those young true eyes of yours, and tell me that you resolve to do the thing that is evil—to wrong your mother and me—to add another drop of bitterness to her cup—to start afresh in a world of insincerity, and falseness, and heartlessness, as you must do if you go to Carline. And think of this, Hermine—if you leave us once, you leave us for ever. To-morrow I shut you out from my heart, but to-day it is all softness and kindness to you! Oh! my child, will you make us so unhappy? ”

Drawn nearer to him by his earnest,

melting tenderness, she still kept back from his outstretched hands, as if unwilling to seal her fate by an action that would be consent, promise, pardon, all in one. She did not weep, but her changing colour and trembling frame testified to the strength of her emotions.

I think even then she would have resisted, had not John's hand touched her shoulder and rested there. That touch, half-commanding, half-persuasive, softened her to tears, and without a word she suffered him to bend down and kiss her brow, thereby sealing forgiveness for the past and hope for the future.

But why was Hermine weeping so bitterly in her room that night when Sophie went in for her last kiss?

Did she really regret Carline's love and luxurious home?

I was sorely perplexed, and my little Sophie's solutions were too simple to afford me any satisfaction.

CHAPTER XV.

UNDER the new aspect of serenity caused by Hermine's treaty of peace with her mother and stepfather, our remaining weeks of holiday passed quickly enough. Perhaps we were all lighter of heart than she who had lightened ours, for Hermine seemed to grow sadder and paler as the days wore on. All my powers of persuasion, all Sophie's loving

words, failed to win her confidence, and she was even more reticent towards her mother. This reserve could but be very painful to Marie's sensitive nature; still she maintained the same steady course of unvarying tenderness, and trusted to the future for a reward.

"She must love me in time," she would say to me with a sweet smile of patience; "surely the love of my own child is not the only one beyond my power to win."

I have often thought of those words, "She must love me in time," and I thank God on my knees that such a time came, though I can never think of it without sorrowful tears.

John busied himself more than ever in farming improvements, and once more

I had the treat of hearing the dear fellow whistling in his old way. There was plenty of room for supervision and practical knowledge in the Weiler estate; how could he better serve Marie or her children than by effecting, as much as lay in his power, an increase of the yearly rents? He was always fond of field pursuits and sports, and thus pleasure and duty lay within his reach. I had every reason now to hope for his happiness.

We might not meet again for some months, and Marie, with her usual thoughtfulness, arranged a pic-nic on our last day, to which the Colonel, my aunt, and Ottilie were invited. Nothing delighted her so much as a *fête-champêtre* on the hills, and she took a childish delight in making all sorts of

delicacies to please her visitors. For herself, she rarely tasted anything beyond the plainest household dishes, but it was an idiosyncrasy of hers to be very tender on the point of other people's small likings and tastes.

It was a lovely May day; the whole earth was decked with blossoms as for a bridal; the fresh pines sent up their sweet incense to heaven; the woods thrilled with music. Ascending a noble hill clad with dense verdure, we left Stuttgart, with its old Schloss and new palace, and grey dome, like a coloured photograph below us, and breathed the pure air of the Suabian Alps. Far away to the right, they stretched blue and billowy, and reminded me of the Merioneth hills.

Half-way we rested, and refreshed ourselves with draughts from a clear spring. Here mugs were let out at a kreutzer apiece for the purpose, by an old man, who was, besides, a vendor of garlands for graves, of ballads, of children's watches, and of cigars. I had not seen Marie so like her old self since she had lost Carl. She humoured my uncle's old-fashioned gallantry; she talked hopefully to me of Carl and of the future; she was almost blithe at our little feast. I think no one seemed wanting in spirits but John. Hermine's cheeks were flushed with pleasure, and though she now and then drew back, as if fearful of allowing herself too much happiness, it was the first time for weeks that I had really seen her smile.

We carried our baskets to a little way-

side inn at Degerloch, where the landlord's daughter, a pretty young girl reminding me of Sophie, served us with coffee, fresh bread, and wine from her father's vineyard. There was a knot of noisy Hohenheim students making merry in the room next us, who, between periods of drinking, smoking, and talking, burst out into the well-known song—

“Schöne Augen, schöne Strahlen,
Schöne rother Wangen Prahlen,
Schöne rothe Lippen, schöne Marmorklippen
Liebt mein Gesicht.”

I noticed that the same little maiden blushed scarlet when we mentioned the *Studenten*. Poor child, had she already learned what it is to grieve and be silent?

“Henderson,” said Ottilie, when the

collation was over, "I have so much to say to you, which may have to wait long if it is not said now. Leave Sophie to papa, and come with me."

We descended into the garden, which was deserted, as the evenings were still too cool for out-of-door coffee parties. Picking our way amid the benches and tables, we found a dry gravel path where we could walk undisturbed.

"So, Henderson, you and our Sophiele intend to be very happy?"

"I think so—not happier, I hope, than we shall see you some day, Ottilie."

She evaded me by another question.

"And John, dear brother?"

"Judge for yourself, Ottilie."

"He loves his wife, but he is ill at ease. I was sorry to find him so altered."

“Altered?—in what way?”

“It is only a fancy, perhaps, and I ought not to tell my fancies even to you, Henderson; but I cannot help thinking that he is unsatisfied and restless. Oh! why does he not do something? What is life without a purpose?”

“Dear Otilie, we may not meet for some time—tell me your purpose in life. You are the very last girl, I know, to sit down and despair because of a disappointment. Are you happy, or are you trying to be so?”

She met my gaze with the whole candour and strength of her soul standing before me in her clear blue eyes.

“No, Hendy, I should never despair. I could have loved him very dearly once; that is over. It was a trouble then;

but, on the whole, I do not think I would have had things happen differently. I know myself better, I esteem myself more, for the assurance that I can govern my own heart. Lesser griefs will be easier to me now; and it is well to learn how to endure. Hendy, I think we look too much to other people for our happiness; after all, our lives can only be so much the better and happier as we make them so ourselves. I am going to be independent, to concentrate my hopes and joys in the duties lying nearest to me."

"Dear, brave Ottilie!"

"Hush!" she said, brightening me with a genuine heart-smile. "I must not be praised even by you, dear brother. Now we will talk of other things."

Hermine is very lovely—not beautiful, mind; I shall never think any other face beautiful but *hers*—but Hermine is a very fair, graceful girl nevertheless; a girl that one must be interested in. Perhaps I feel more drawn towards her on account of that sad business about her marriage.”

“And Count Cress—I mean the Prince?”

She laughed gaily.

“I believe, Henderson, that papa feels he has accomplished his destiny; for Christine is married to Count Cress at last!”

“And are they happy?”

“She is the best wife in the world for a man of his stamp. When he is tiresome and sulky in the house, she rates him soundly, and sends him into

the garden, to his roses and chrysanthemums; then she brings him back to good temper by singing his favourite songs, and putting on her handsomest dresses. They are constantly quarrelling, but I believe they are thoroughly happy. And what is more amusing than all, is to see the very amicable intercourse between papa and the Count. I believe papa really grieved at heart once that their little passages of arms were over; but the vexation is in some degree made up for by the extreme attention he obtains from his old antagonist. You know papa always boasts that, like the ancient Romans, when he conquers he makes allies, and he will persist in thinking to this day that the Count is afraid of him, and would never have

married Christine but for his intervention."

We talked of many trifles, as brothers and sisters will, who are parting with full hearts. There were some graver matters, which we dared not speak of, but they were hinted at by stray words, as landward sea-birds are messages of the storm at sea.

When we were called in to prepare for starting, she caught me by the arm, and said earnestly,

"Hermine likes you—you have influence over her?"

"Yes, dear Ottilie; but why do you ask—why do you look so pale?"

"Can you trust her?—I mean, is she self-reliant and firm?"

"In the right, yes; with her own feelings, no."

“And she confides in you?”

“She has done so often.”

“But you have not her whole heart?”

“That is a difficult question, especially applied to Hermine.”

She entered the house without answering, and in a quarter of an hour we parted. During that time Ottilie placed herself by Hermine's side, and entered into conversation; I could not hear the subject of it, but Ottilie was very earnest, and I noticed that Hermine's cheek grew pale and red by turns. When they took leave of each other, Ottilie bent forwards as if to kiss her, but Hermine, either wilfully, or from misinterpretation, merely shook hands.

“Adè, adè,” cried the Colonel, em-

bracing both Sophie and myself at once; "Zeit bringt Rosen. We will meet again when the cherries are ripe. Take care of thyself, Herr Professor. Take care of thy husband, Fraule Professor. Remember that the maid I have hired for you expects no beer; and always mind to get your dinners out on a Sunday. It really costs less, and the Jungfer wants none, as she gets leave to visit her friends. Be right happy, dear children. God be with ye. Adè."

It was dusk when we started, and before we reached Stuttgart night came on, dark and starless. During the first hour scarcely ten words had been spoken, save by Sophie and myself. How strange and solemn it is to think of the mysteries that we are to each

other! Philosophers can trace the path of the sun through countless firmaments, but who can read a single thought of his brother or sister? How much of love, of fear, of hatred, of veneration, goes down unspoken to the grave, in our heart of hearts!

I could not forget Otilie's words—"Can you trust her?"—and I thought of Hermine from time to time, with vague feelings of interest and doubt, for which I could hardly account.

Why was Hermine not to be trusted? How should she prove traitor to Marie—to John or to myself?"

My reverie was broken by a sudden jerk of the carriage, by which I was thrown headwards from my seat, and sent sprawling I knew not where.

We had entered one of those narrow roadways so plentiful by the banks of the Neckar, shaded on one side by thickly planted fruit-trees, and cut sharply down on the other, towards the cultivated land. Owing to the pitchy darkness I could see nothing, but the sound of Hermine's unconcerned voice re-assured me.

Scrambling to my feet, I discovered how matters stood. The coachman, either from sleepiness or intoxication, had allowed one of the horses to go off the track, by which means the carriage had been upset, and the animals so frightened that they began kicking furiously.

“What the deuce are you up to, Fritz!” called out John in a rage;

“can’t you stop the horses from kicking the carriage to pieces, instead of blubbering there!”

For Fritz, after the manner of delinquent servants, stood aloof crying with terror and grief.

Having seen that the ladies were safely dislodged, John rushed to the horses’ heads, and holding them with an iron hand, administered sufficient punishment to quiet their fractiousness—Fritz standing by, muttering prayers for forgiveness with sobs.

“Now, my man,” said John, “just lead these horses on to Weiler, if you’re quite sure they won’t be the death of you—we are about three miles off, and you can be back with the Amtmann’s chaise in an hour—don’t let us wait

longer, or you'll remember it. We will wait at the miller's cottage close by. Now, Marie—now, Hendy, follow me by the river path."

It was not an agreeable termination to the day's pleasure, but no one seemed inclined to make much trouble of it, except John, who grumbled with more irritation than I had ever seen him shew before at such a trifle. We soon reached the mill, and after much knocking awoke the goodwife, who came down in her blue cotton night-gown, quite unprepared for such august company.

"Mother of Christ!" she said in dismay, "I thought it had been sister Babel's husband come to tell me that her time was near, for I promised to go to the poor thing. Gracious lady,

good gentlemen, step in, whilst I run upstairs and put on my day-gown."

Marie looked pale and weary, and seated herself on the nearest chair. Hermine took off her bonnet, and remained standing where the light streamed full on her face and hair.

How is it that some women have the power of looking far more beautiful at times, and as if by a volition of their own? Is it by force of some subtle influence in their possession, which they can call out at will, thereby overpowering us with a melting softness of eyes, or unspoken sweetness of lips, hitherto new and undiscovered?—or is it a trick of appearance only, as any other beautiful thing may be made still more beautiful by contrast and circumstance?

I know not, but whether by natural power, or artistic trick, Hermine certainly made her loveliness more apparent to us that night, and was conscious of it.

She seemed to be in a reckless mood of happiness that lighted her eyes, and tinted her cheeks and lips, as if with delicate wine. Her golden hair, always so carefully dressed, had fallen from the comb in the upsetting of the carriage, and as she shook it over her shoulders there seemed to be fire-flies here and there in the tangled mass. The richness of her dress, too—a richer dress than Hermine had worn since her return home — being of an indescribably soft texture, with many silvery opaline colours dancing on it, added no

little to the brightness of her beauty, for

“Let no maiden think, however fair,
She is not fairer in new clothes than old.”

And Dr. Johnson was right in advising his fair Mrs. Thrale to dress like a butterfly. Young pretty women are always prettier and younger in lively colours. Only those who go to mental or physical work like men should dress soberly.

Fancy to yourself, then, Hermine in the miller's cottage, looking as if she were some fairy princess amid such humble surroundings of bare mud walls and floor; and if you think me a fool, my sensible lady friends, for talking so much of beauty, remember that we of the sterner sex are often called to account now-a-days for our want of due chivalric admiration of the fair.

“Are you not tired, Hermine—won’t you sit down?” asked Sophiechen.

“No, no! who is ever tired by a day’s pleasure? I have been happy to-day. Do not urge me to go to sleep and forget it,” she replied. “If I could, I would die, and never sleep to wake again.”

There was a strange under-current to this lightness, which startled me. Her mellow laugh hurt me more than her tears had ever done before.

“Die! Hermine, you frighten me!” cried Sophie; “who would die on a happy day?”

“But if the happy day is never, never to come again, Sophiechen?—if the waking on the morrow must bring a sorrow from which there is no escape

— if you knew that the despair of that sorrow is only to end in death sooner or later—would you rather not die soon, dear? But let us talk of something brighter. Oh! when I am so happy, will no one be in tune with me?”

“Are you happy?” asked John, with some bitterness, “and why? I see no occasion that you have had to-day for such especial enjoyment, Hermine?”

Marie looked up with a smile.

“I think it has been a Red Letter Day with all of us, John.”

He lighted his cigar, and smoked away gloomily. By-and-bye he spoke to Hermine again, and this time in a softer tone.

“Do you intend this to be your last

Red Letter Day?" he asked, and looked at her earnestly.

She blushed. An unreadable smile passed over her lips. Then she answered him in low troubled tones, as if from some hidden depth of feeling.

"How can it be otherwise? Sophie and Hendy are going—we shall have no more holidays. I must be more alone now than I have been."

His eyes followed her gaze persistently.

"Ask your own heart that," he replied.

"I will ask my heart nothing—I dare not," she said, with the same superficial ease of manner, whilst her face had grown very earnest.

"Then let me question it for you. There is nothing to fear, Hermine—you may yet have Red Letter Days."

“No! no! no!” she exclaimed, half impatiently, half with exultation; “I don’t wish for your oracular prophecies—you will never persuade me that a second holiday equals the first. You must not reason with me, or tempt me into beliefs just now. I am happy, and I am not happy often. Let me keep so for to-night.”

She moved towards Sophie, and, kneeling down, laid her fair head on my wife’s lap.

“Oh!” she added, “if I could only choose my own dreams, how willingly I would sleep here for ever.”

“Are you sure they would be good ones?” cried Sophie archly, whilst she stroked the long, lustrous locks of the kneeling girl.

Hermine shuddered, and burying her face in her hands, said not a word more.

Why did my brother's eyes follow every look and action of Hermine so restlessly? Why did the two seek to veil each other's meaning under a show of raillery?

Alas! when was it that a happy day did not end in sad dreams?

Oh! Marie, my sister, I toss my head on an agonized pillow, for thinking of that dark abyss yawning before thee! Though my heart could be so happy in my own future, it is not happy enough to shed one ray of hope over thine. Dark! dark! all is dark before thee and around!—surely hell itself were not darker! Can I help

thee, oh, my sister with the serene face, and the high soul that can stoop to no second heaven, no tarnished faith, no imperfect love?

The day dawns on my wretchedness, and I see no way!

CHAPTER XVI.

THERE is something in the break of day which is unspeakably solemn—not in the break of day as Virgil has it, where Aurora leaves the golden couch of Tithonus, and scatters dewy light upon the earth; nor as Spenser has it, who shews us Phœbus dancing forth, fresh as a bridegroom to meet his bride—but in the gradual dawning of the light, as we see it with our own hearts and eyes. Nature is nobler

then, because she is sadder than Greek mythologies or poets' impersonations can make her. Truer, therefore more beautifully, the Hellenic worshippers have called Sleep the brother of Death; for, watching the impenetrable darkness and stillness fade away beneath the growing light, the gradual rising of hill and forest into strength and power, the dimpling of valley and pasture, the shaping and colouring of every minute object by infinitely gentle degrees, till the purple mists have wholly cleared, and the perfect glory of life, and sound, and motion is before us, it seems as if we had witnessed not only a Waking, but a Resurrection.

I was always an early riser, but on

the morning of which I speak, in consequence of having lain awake all night, I fell into a short dose after the sun had shed its first ray over the fountain, and after the tinkling of the cattle bells had waked up the milk-maid. The striking of the clock made me jump up at six, however, when to my surprise I saw Sophie already dressed, and busily packing our portmanteau in the next room.

“Sophiechen, I do not think I shall leave to-day—we had better not.”

“Not leave, husband?”

“Carline did not particularly urge it, and I feel a great desire to stay.”

“Then I will leave my packing,” said my pattern little wife, quite contented with the reason I had given her.

To wake on a fine spring morning sick at heart and strangely out of tune both in body and mind, with the carol of the lark and the singing of the breeze on the hills, is bad enough; but to wake up and feel a dark cloud hanging over you, that you know not how to avert, a wearing anxiety for others, and caused by others, whom you would give a third of life to save; worst of all, when you feel bound to hide both fear and anxiety from the loving eyes of your wife—this is indeed hard to bear.

That the future honour and happiness of Marie, John, and Hermine were in danger, I could hardly doubt—yet how was I to help them? How could I watch over Marie's interests without acting the part of a spy?—how could I speak

those words to my brother, which once spoken might never be recalled, and might divide us for life?

Besides, if I erred in my unhappy suspicions, should I ever be able to forgive myself for the evil thought?—should I ever dare to take my brother's hand, or to look into Hermine's clear young eyes again? No, no, I would believe the best.

The early part of the day was spent as usual by John about the farm; but he did not come into my study as had been his wont, to smoke a cigar with me before dinner. Neither did he express any pleasure at the fact of my protracted stay, which omission I could look over less readily than the former one.

Marie, Hermine, and Sophie passed

the morning at work in the white drawing-room. I went in once or twice to speak to my wife, but elicited no smile or word from Hermine, who busied herself over her flosses and worsteds with a diligence unusual to her, for she hated fancy work, though skilled in it, as are all young German ladies.

“What do ladies think of during such periods of silent industry,” I said laughingly on the occasion of my last interruption; “I have entered this room three times since breakfast, and never once to find one of you talking. What are *you* thinking of so intently, Hermine?”

She blushed slightly, and then recovering herself took refuge in her old arch manner.

“That is an impertinent question, sir. I shall not answer it.”

“Perhaps less impertinent as coming from me,” I said; “think twice about it, Hermine.”

“About what?—I don’t understand you.”

“Think twice before you call me impertinent in asking your thoughts—or guessing them.”

She looked at me sharply.

“I wish you would not trouble yourself to do either the one or the other,” she replied with indignant flaming eyes; “it is not like you—it is not like any friend to force a scrutiny upon me.”

“Don’t fly your arrows at each other here,” put in Marie with a deprecating look, for she hated discussion; “when gentlemen come into ladies’ drawing-rooms they take

off their helmets, Hendy, like the knights of old, and are protected and forbidden from assault."

"Oh, Hermine and I understand each other, in spite of anything that may look to the contrary," I said; "and she will give me five minutes' quiet chat before I leave, for all her hard looks."

"That she won't," Hermine's face said as plainly as any written words could do; but she said nothing. We were joined at dinner by two old officers from Ludwigsburg, who were particularly interested in John's farming reformatations, having no idea of the good old Suffolk four course—wheat, fallow, barley, and turnips; nor of Ransome's patent ploughs and chaff-cutters, which he had procured from England—nor of the expediency of spending a thousand

gulden on drainage, which would not show profit till a third crop. For myself, I was no farmer, and preferred staying indoors to have a game of bagatelle and roulette with the ladies and my old friend the pastor.

All through the afternoon Hermine studiously avoided me. She detested bagatelle, and had always made a *moue* at any visit of the Herr Pfarrer, who, good old soul, was always rather redolent of smoke and innocent of soap; still she played game after game with him now, entirely to preclude the chance of a *tête-à-tête* with me, and I could see that I must play my game well to get it.

Evening closed in early, and our good friends having amply complimented the eight o'clock supper of game, sausage, potatoes, and coffee, immediately left. How the evening passed I know not, but I re-

member that everyone was silent, and all kept making spasmodic efforts to talk naturally. John looked nervous and worried; Hermine's cheeks flushed and paled by turns; Marie and Sophie were only sad, I think, at the coming parting; for myself, I was in the wretchedest state of uncertainty and dread.

When the clock struck nine John rang for his study lamp.

"I will say good night now, for I have some writing to do downstairs," he said, in a strangely evasive manner; "Schlafen Sie wohl, Fraule Sophie—good night, old boy."

He took no notice of Hermine, who was seated at the table turning over the leaves of a book, but touched Marie's hand as he passed her, and she looked up into his face with anxious, loving eyes.

Something in that look went to his heart. He stepped back as if with a sudden impulse, and kissed her forehead fervently.

“God bless you, dear,” he half whispered. Then he left the room.

In half an hour Marie retired too, for we were always early at the Schloss. Immediately the door had closed upon her, Hermine rose.

Sophie and I were standing in one of the alcoves watching the moon-rise; she approached us with a weary attempt to smile.

“I envy you two, who are never tired, and never out of tune. Good night, dear Sophiechen.”

“We are finding out if the weather will be fine for our journey to-morrow,” cried Sophie blithely.

“To-morrow!”

As Hermine repeated my wife's words, her face turned to a deadly pallor.

"Had you forgotten that we leave to-morrow?—I wish it were not to be so," added Sophie.

"Yes, I had forgotten—I did not think," and she could say no more for her agitation.

Now or never I must be heard.

"Hermine," I said, catching both her hands in mine, and retaining them with a cold, hard grasp, "you do not leave me so. I will know the secret of that white face before I leave Weiler."

Her courage forsook her for an instant. The proud tears glistening on her eyelashes told me that.

"Leave us, Sophie," I whispered firmly.

"No, for God's sake, stay with me!"

Hermine cried almost wildly. "Sophie, will you desert me now, when I never needed you so much?—when *I* am wretched and helpless, and *he* is so strong, and can use his strength so cruelly? Are you no more my friend than that, Sophie? Do you not really love me?"

"Leave us, Sophie," I whispered again, and my poor little wife went in trembling and in tears. Poor child, she little thought that my hard words caused me more grief than they could do to herself, but I dared not say what it was my duty to say to Hermine in sight of Sophie's innocent brow.

"It is cowardly—mean of you, Hendy, I will never, never forget it!—if any shame or disgrace ever comes upon you I think I could not help feeling glad!—if you struck me I would not care that I carried the mark

of your passion with me to the grave!—you have proved yourself to be worse than my enemy, because you have been underhand and ungenerous—by what right do you keep me here?—let me go!”

Her passionate indignation gave way to deep despondency. Tears came fast, then her voice grew low and spiritless. I own that my heart relented then.

“Why do you make me so wretched? Oh, Henderson, don’t let me learn to hate my only friend—don’t make me say bitter things to you that I may wish to recall—let me go!”

“Look into my face, Hermine, and answer one question.”

“Ask me nothing now—oh, have you no pity?” she cried despairingly, and sank on her knees before me.

“I *do* pity you, Hermine—I am your friend, and shall never be less so because you may act harshly to me when I try you—for the very reason that I am your friend I ask you, and I ask with the intention of being answered—can you on your knees, and in the Presence of One whom you fear—can you, on your belief in that awful Presence, on your belief in the religion which you follow, assure me that there is no traitorous thought in your heart to your mother, to your principles of right, to your maidenly honour?”

Her head drooped on her breast—the tumultuous beating of her heart stirred the folds of her dress—I could hear my own beating in the stillness.

“Have you no answer to that question?”
I asked, in a low voice.

"None," she said, coldly.

"Hermine, Hermine, look me in the face and let me read your soul's innocence there—do not leave me with the thought that I must love you no more—that I must not let Sophie love you."

"Who would not rather be judged of God than of man if you mete out your mercies so?" she asked, with bitterness. "It is well there is no earthly Hades, Henderson, or I am sure that few would escape if you were the Minos."

Her cold sarcasm hurt me more than her fiery words of anger. I cast away her hands as if they were stinging snakes.

"We are fighting on equal ground now," I said; "after your severe reproof to me, I shall not expect to see *you* run away like a coward, Hermine."

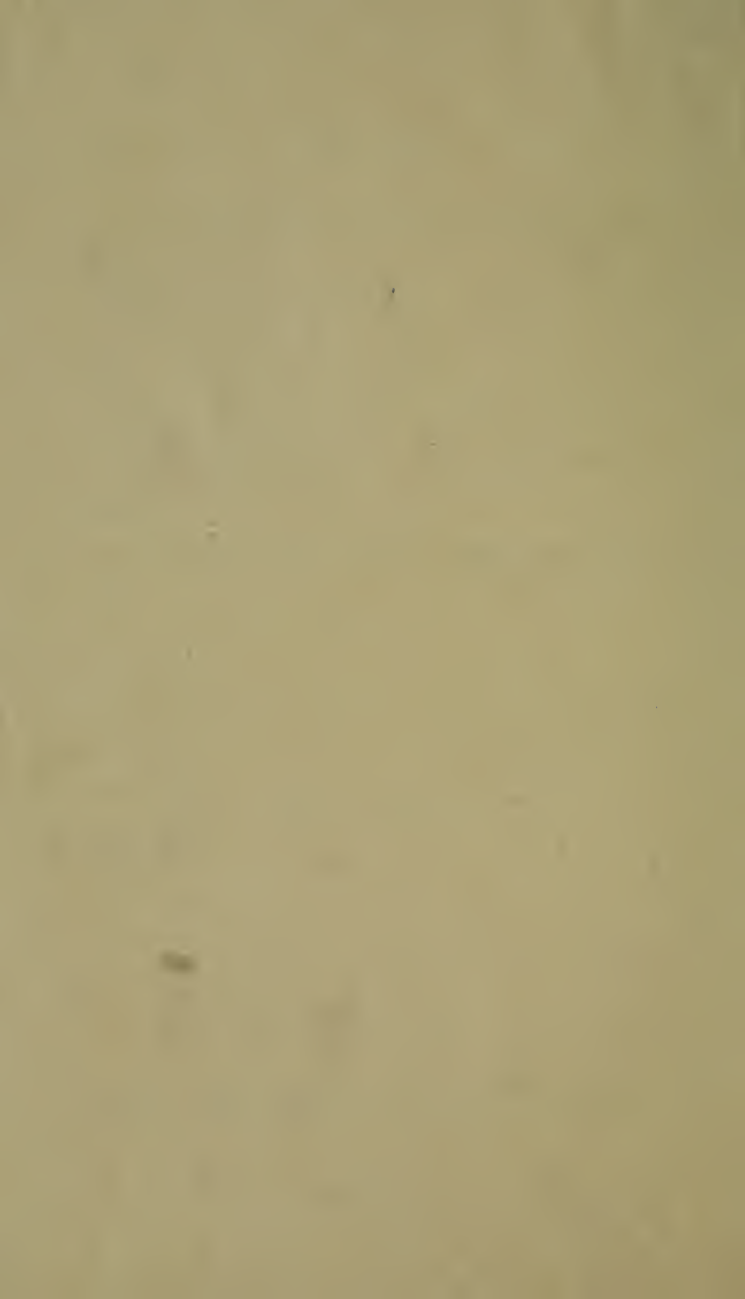
She stood before me, pale, tearless, passionless.

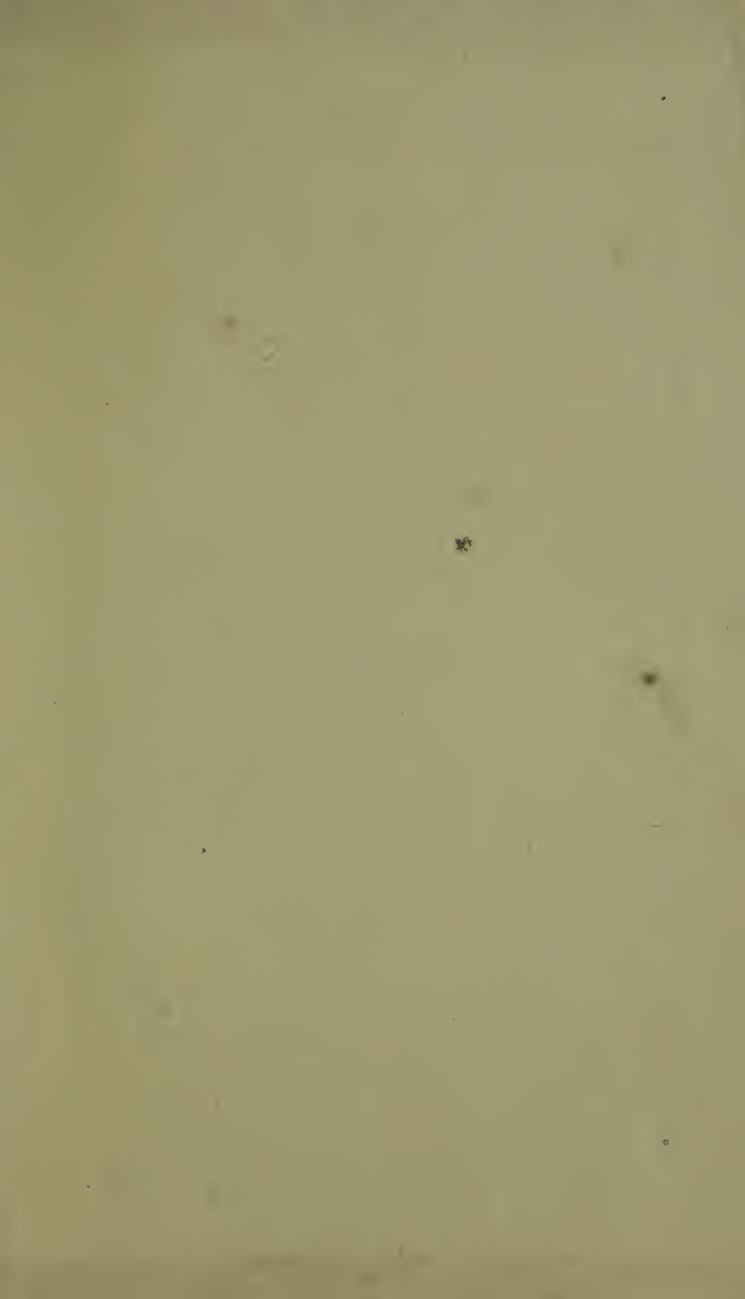
“We have had enough of this, Henderson. I forgive you, though I cannot be humble enough to beg for pardon in return. Women have need of their pride sometimes.”

“God help you!” I said—and we parted so.

END OF VOL. II.







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